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Madame Lafarge

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LAFARGE;

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

COMPLETE

IN ONE VOLUME.

PHILADELPHIA:
CAREY & HART.
1841.

TO THE LADIES OF ENGLAND.

Go, oh! my thoughts, towards that free and lovely Isle, which has sympathies for misfortune, which will have belief for truth;—go, and bear my thanks to the noble daughters of England, who have mixed their tears with my tears; carry my benedictions to those wives, virtuous enough to believe in virtue, strong enough, perhaps, openly to absolve a poor, condemned woman.

Noble Ladies, who are the happiness of those whom your hearts have chosen, the joys of your children, the glories of your homes, when I come to you, do not repulse me; let the sorrows of the prisoner mix themselves with your blessed and well-loved lives; give a tear to her griefs, absolution to her faults; let your faith protect her innocence on earth, let your prayers mount for her towards Heaven.

MARIE CAPPELLE.

Prison of Tulle,
14*th September*, 1841.

TO MY FRIENDS.

I do not inscribe to you a book; I confide to you my actions and my thoughts.

Admitted to your affections, I would not willingly be estranged from you. It is necessary that I should tell you my errors, that you may pardon them; my innocence, that it may ensure your protection; my sorrows, that you who have hitherto loved me best, may continue to love me always.

In the solitude of my prison I have forgotten my sufferings, in order to return with you into the feelings of my life. I have disclosed to you all my joys, all my griefs, all my tears. I have remembered, wept, and written. I have not asked of God to make me eloquent, but I have prayed that he would endue all my recollections with charity and truth, and that he would give to my words the power of persuasion—of conviction. If you shall approve what I have done; if it shall have strengthened a single belief, or have reclaimed a wavering mind, my object will have been accomplished.

My generous friends, you who have withheld me from despair, by placing my honour under the safeguard of your conviction, who have become the guardians of my unhappiness, may you be a thousand times rewarded!

I have preserved my life for the struggle, my strength to prepare for, and hasten, the great day of truth and restoration. If God shall call me to himself before I reach the goal I aim at, I entrust to you the good name of my father; I ask of you to do me justice in my epitaph.

Marie Cappelle.

Prison of Tulle,
July 1841.

THE

EDITORS TO THE PUBLIC.

The publication of this work is a grave matter, differently appreciated, of which we feel the whole importance, and which we feel bound in honour to explain.

By a mode familiar to the gentlemen of the bar, M. Odillon Barrot has, previously to its publication, qualified a work which he had not read, as a *defamatory libel;* and has stigmatized as an *avaricious tool*, an editor whom he knew not. Neither of these names is more true than the other; and we repudiate both of these epithets.

To commence with the second. We will tell M. Odillon Barrot, that the property of this work does not belong to us. And that if, in spite of the attacks with which the advocate of the Léautaud family threatens us, any profit should result from the publication, that profit, a consideration very secondary even in the eye of the author, will be neither for him nor ourselves.

To explain its destination, it will suffice to remind M. Odillon Barrot of that which he already knows, that nothing is gratuitous in our age,—no! not even eloquence; and that, when it is necessary to defend oneself in the past, the present, and the future, from powerful enemies, there are obligations from which neither ruin, loneliness, nor misfortune can exempt you.

We will also remind M. Odillon Barrot of a personal fact, the memory of which, it appears to us, should render him less ardent against those who, in the present case, without losing any of the respect due to the law, profess not in so lofty a degree the fanaticism of legal prejudice.

In 1817, a man, Wilfred Regnault, having an honourable

position in society, had been condemned to death by the Court of Assizes de l'Eure for the assassination of a female, committed under circumstances of great horror.

Public opinion, excited by the evidence alleged, the composition of the jury, and the evidently hostile character of many of the witnesses, more especially by the immorality and detestable principles of the principal one, was violently aroused in favour of the condemned. At the same moment, when Benjamin Constant offered the support of his pen to Regnault, a young counsellor of the Court of Cassation, who was no other than *M. Odillon Barrot* himself, charged with the defence of the convict, not content to plead the question of form, was not ashamed to maintain (vide the *Moniteur*, Dec. 1, 1817,) that there existed both a physical and moral impossibility that Regnault could be guilty of the crime for which he had been condemned. And then, attacking the deposition of the principal witness, this M. Odillon Barrot exclaimed, "Yet Regnault has been declared guilty! The deposition of a single witness has sufficed—and what a witness! A man, himself guilty, by confession, of many acts of crime; a man who has been belied by all whose testimony was necessary to give the appearance even of truth to his own. Is it possible, then, that a jury should have declared Regnault guilty?"

In spite of his efforts, M. Odillon Barrot failed to substantiate the defence; but Regnault, definitively sentenced, had his penalty commuted by royal clemency into perpetual imprisonment. Still the obstinate lawyer, convinced of his client's innocence, would not consider himself defeated. At his instigation, Regnault attacked the witness Mesnil on the score of perjury. The tribunal of Evreux rejected his complaint. The Cour Royal of Rouen confirmed this decision. This new incident, in a cause which occupied the attention of all, came before the Court of Cassation, and M. Odillon Barrot re-appeared to sustain, in the name of a convict, civilly dead, an accusation of perjury. Here, moreover, the advocate of Regnault, drawn on by his conviction, far overpassed the limits of the case itself. "Shall not a man," he cried (vide the *Moniteur*, Feb. 15, 1818), "a man, whose innocence is evident to all, yet who is oppressed by every tribunal, find safety but in the power of public opinion? Ah! let your judgment teach us that the

unfortunate shall find an asylum in the law, without the necessity of seeking it elsewhere." This last appeal was rejected, like the preceding.

And yet, without wishing to say of Marie Cappelle, condemned by a jury, that which Odillon Barrot said of Regnault, equally convicted, that her innocence is evident *to all* (an expression contrary both to truth and the respect we ever owe to the decisions of justice, even while we doubt her infallibility), if we prove the similarity of many portions of the case we analyze with certain circumstances in the "*procès d'empoisonnement;*" if we remember that, thirteen years later (in 1830), Regnault, whose guilt ever remained a mystery, recovered his freedom; if we compare M. Odillon Barrot's audacious speeches in 1818, notwithstanding judgments in the Court of Assizes at Evreux, in the Court of Cassation and the decisions of the tribunal at Evreux, and the Royal Court of Rouen, four decisions given by four different tribunals; if we compare such speeches with those of M. Odillon Barrot, twenty-three years later, when, with a contrary conviction, and with no fear of compromising the power of his tongue by blasting the accused with the lightning of his eloquence, he attacked even the defender of that accused in a position which precluded him from reply; we shall perhaps be astonished to see the same man, who had so largely employed, in his own name, and vindicated in behalf of Regnault, whom he proclaimed innocent, the right of appealing from the judges to public opinion, carry to-day his fanatic prejudice for legal decision so far as to vilify, without knowing the complaints of, the condemned, to threaten to stay her pen, and to proclaim as "*avaricious tools*," men who, in the midst of such heavy uncertainty, have not believed themselves justified in refusing to promulgate all which may enlighten the public more completely in the case.

It was our duty, before entering on the defence of Marie Cappelle, and thus taking a part of its responsibility, to read, to examine ,and to weigh. This we have done with as scrupulous sentiments of morality as those of the most cautious; and in subscribing our name, yet an honoured one, to such a defence, we conceive we have not only exerted a right, but have *fulfilled a duty*.

In truth, Marie Cappelle, the principal actor in a judicial

drama, unexampled for terror in our annals, has momentarily concentrated on herself the attention of all Europe. During two whole days, on the weighty testimony of scientific men, all Europe believed in the innocence of that female; during two days humanity rejoiced that a frightful crime had not been committed, and that a youthful female, accomplished and interesting, came out pure from an infamous accusation. For two days did the voice of the whole press repeat the applause of an affected auditory, while, echoing from one end of France to another, those acclamations wakened a sympathetic echo in every generous breast.

Two days after, all was changed. Science rudely destroyed the decision of science. Two days after, science saw crime where she had seen innocence; poison where she had seen none. The verdict of a jury hallowed her new decision. An affrighted audience passed abruptly from the conviction of innocence to the suspicion of guilt; and that same woman, so calm, and so radiant with the joy of an acquittal, suddenly precipitated from life into death, lay motionless, glanceless, thoughtless, and mute, upon her bed, awaiting the sentence which devoted her to infamy; while the world, astonished by this sudden change, and terrified to behold the most mysterious problems of the heart, the most grand and precious interests of humanity, the life and honour of a creature fashioned in the likeness of God, resting on the chemical analysis of the millioneth portion of an atom of matter, demanded—"Where is truth or cartainty? Are we to believe the science of yesterday, the science of to-day, or the science of to-morrow?"

Yet is not all ended for this unhappy woman. Scarcely recovered from the lethargic apathy in which the dark changes and mournful *dénoüement* of that tragedy have plunged her, dead to civil existence, crushed beneath the weight of a terrible sentence, she must rise and drag herself again into the arena, to face a second accusation, less heavy, but not less infamous than the preceding one. Not only has she to contend with the organ of the law, but with a whole family, rich, honoured, and powerful, supported by two advocates, of whom, one successfully replaces talent by energy, while the other possesses the prestige of a powerful eloquence and a lofty reputation. Against such adversaries, deprived of her principal defender, who has left

her to herself, despairing not of her innocence, but of her safety,* she has no defence. Appearances, the necessity of proof, the absence of the principal witness, the change of public opinion, a former condemnation, the imprudence of a lofty imagination, a not all-blameless past, a blasted present, a hopeless future, and the darkness of a cause, whose secret rests with her, another female, and the eternal God,—all crowd upon her, and leave her to despair and the uncertain opinion of the ill-judging world.

Even thus situated, stricken by the law, exhausted both in body and mind, this woman disdains to seek repose enveloped in the mantle of her legal death. Powerless, she yet persists in combating to the last; in the midst of every difficulty, she takes the pen to defend herself against those resounding voices which have succeeded in her condemnation.

In a few weeks she writes two volumes, overflowing with talent, animation, originality, grace, and polished irony. With inconceivable freedom of spirit, she disengages herself from the moral shadows of a fearful doom, to give her tameless thought its reign; to wander smiling, in mockery or grief, amongst the labyrinth of her memories. She pleads not, nor argues; but tells her tale, as though she neither knew how to argue nor to plead. She allows her pen freely to run upon the paper, telling her story from her birth to her imprisonment—her family—her friends—her relations—her father's death, which so early deprived her of his fondness and affection—her mother's second marriage, seen by her with concentrated bitterness—the death of her grandfather—her last love, and her firmest support, which completed her isolation in the world—the vice of an education ill directed, now rigorous to excess, and now beyond measure lax—the shadows of a character, ardent, eccentric, tameless, yet noble, proud, sensitive, and generous—her childish impressions—her dreams—her joys—her girlish intrigues—her connection with Madame de Léautaud—the episode of Clavé—the hurried marriage of the author; the base deceit which decided it—the first day's journey in the post-chaise—the brutal *bath scene* at Orleans—the more fearful one following her arrival at Glandier—

* See the letter of M. Paillet in the *Siècle.*

the famous letter which formed the basis of the accusation, and of which she reveals the origin, the cause, and the object—the primal resignation—the after calm and serenity —and, finally, the fearful catastrophe which plunged her into an abyss of evils; in one word, all the events, important or trifling, which saddened or rejoiced the life of Marie Cappelle—all the good or bad thoughts suggested by her imagination or her heart, are painted in a style that brings the most admired pages of Madame de Sévigné, or the most highly wrought pictures of George Sand, to our memory.

And because this work, in which Marie Cappelle has had the good feeling to leave herself unpanegyrized and her enemies unvilified; because this work, which only answers the most inveterate attacks with the most delicate of railleries; because this work, in which she paints, relates, mocks, smiles, weeps, but never curses; in which she confesses and bewails her faults, while she denies her crimes; because this work is a *justificative memorial:* because her cause is so shrouded, her situation is so evil, and circumstances so overwhelming; her adversaries so powerful and her defence so badly conducted at the first, that the eloquence of a Demosthenes, with the enthusiasm of conviction, could never dream of establishing her innocence at the present hour; because Marie Cappelle, convinced that she has nothing to expect save from herself and from the future, undertakes the solitary conflict; because she would develope with her pen what she failed to impress by her voice; because the strides of justice have been more rapid than her pen; *because she is condemned*, she shall be interdicted, in the name of the moral public, or rather in the name of her adversaries, from crying aloud, even unto death, that she is guiltless!

And this is in a country where humanity has wept so many judicial errors in tears of blood, sometimes produced by the ephemeral abuse of opinion, and at others by a fatal combination of overpowering circumstances; in the country of *Calas*, *D'Anglade*, *Surques*, *Lebrun*, *Legras*, &c. &c.; a country where, even recently, an unfortunate man, *Dehors*, condemned by two courts of assize to perpetual labour, has been acquitted of all guilt by a third; in a country where, scarcely five years since, the sonorous voice of *M. Odillon*

Barrot, in a dilemma so often fatal, summoned a jury to choose between the accuser and the accused; between a young girl of sixteen, brought up under her mother's wing, and an officer spotted with previously known misconduct and guilt; and wrenched from that jury a verdict of condemnation at which the very president of the court trembled! In such a country, with such terrible examples, when the relatives and friends of La Roncière have been able to labour without fear at the re-establishment of her innocence, by destroying in the public prints the evidence of her triumphant adversaries, they would deny to a convict *herself* the right of appealing, with a modest and decent confidence, from her enemies to the public, from the present to the future.

And when a woman, whose name has originated such diversity of feeling; whose cause has been enveloped in so much mystery; and whose voice has been so courageous, at last determines to render an account to all—of her thoughts and of her life—they would say to her: "Thy cause is so difficult of judgment, thy position so wretched, thy existence so irrevocably blighted, that no orator has daring enough to undertake thy defence; thou knowest not how to speak, but thou wouldst write; thou shalt not write! We have been able, while thou wert absent for four hours, we three, with one glory to direct on thy vacant place a torrent of fiery words. We have been able, failing in that respect we owe to woman, however criminal she may appear, and more especially when the law has placed her beyond its pale, to call thee aloud a poisoner and a thief. Instead of entering on the unequal combat, instead of contending in bloated and furious words, thou wouldst answer with thy pen—a pen, whose talent and decency, render it but the more dangerous—thy tale can only be a lie; thou shalt not write!"

We say openly, that such arguments neither convince nor terrify us. Before printing the Memoirs of Marie Cappelle, we have repeated to ourselves, in order to tranquillize our conscience, that there was one in France with more judgment than Marie Cappelle, and that this one was all France; that Marie Cappelle could only be finally judged when she was understood; and that, in her position, the best way, and the only one to be understood, was for her, as for

all the world, to write. We feel assured that the public, examining this defence in its cooler moments, unbiassed by impetuous gestures, the declamation, the fire, and the thrilling voice of the advocate, and comparing it with the attack so brilliant in style and so powerful in argument, will not risk being so misled, or surprised, as to lose the capability of determining on which side truth exists, and on which side falsehood. We have repeated to ourselves, that the enemies of Marie Cappelle, far from fearing this last and decisive proof, ought to hail it with delight, since it alone could complete their triumph, by furnishing Marie Cappelle with the means of defence, and the public with the means of being a competent judge of the combat.

We never would have consented to edit a libel; but we edit, without fear or scruple, a work of talent and taste—a work in which the author only developes assertions previously put forth, and wherein the refinements of the pen, in the eyes of those even who consider them hypocritical, can be considered no more than the just homage of vice paid to virtue. Nor, in acting thus, have we been guided, as has been so falsely stated, by cupidity. Far from wishing to defile the public morals or the human majesty of legal decisions, we have the desire to contribute, as much as possible, to the accomplishment of an end which should be the desire af all—*the manifestation of truth.*

MEMOIRS

OF

MADAME LAFARGE.

CHAPTER I.

I was born on the birth-day of my father, in 1816.

That kind father had desired a masculine *bouquet;** but he was comforted when he looked on my mother, and imprinted a kiss on the brow of his little Marie.

A first child, the joy and pride of two generations, ought to be as beautiful as the angels. Alas! I came into the world sufficiently ugly to dispel even the illusions of a mother! The prettiest bonnets, the gayest clothes, failed to improve me; and, in order to admire me as much as my family, who maintained that my yellow complexion was charming, and that my leanness indicated distinction, the good friends to whom I was presented consented to sacrifice truth to politeness.

My baptism was the prologue to a marriage between Mademoiselle Destillière, a friend of my mother, and M. de Brack, whose military standing, mind, and handsome person possessed a value much less positive, but an attraction almost equally powerful, as the splendid dowry of the wealthy heiress. Mlle. Destillière forgot me with the dreams of her girlhood; and nothing accrued to me from that union except an excellent sponsor, and the name of *Fortunée*, so foreign to my life.

In recalling my earliest remembrances, I see first the

* It is the custom in France to make presents on birth-days; and of whatever they may consist, they are called *bouquets.*

great trees of Villers-Hellon—the little carriage in which I was wheeled through the avenues of the park—a plum-tree under which I broke an arm while my nurse Ursula shared a plum with a handsome gamekeeper.

If I seek further, I recall my grandmother, with a long red shawl, leaning over my cradle to watch my awaking; I hear my mother, who scolded my nurse when I was naughty, and my grandfather, who sang to me with a hoarse voice the *Magnificat des Cordonniers de Montpellier*.

At a later period my father became Lieutenant-Colonel at Douai; and I ought to add to the list of my dearest reminiscences, the Sunday parade and the cannon of the polygon. My nurse Ursula did not altogether understand the poetry of the manœuvres, and my mother feared an accident; an attempt was therefore made to induce me to renounce my favourite amusement, by surrounding me with toys and sweetmeats; but if I could manage to ascertain the moment when my father put on his sword to go out, I hung about his neck, wept and triumphed.

Scarcely had we reached the parade, when I quitted the arms of Ursula for those of the soldiers. They allowed me to fire off their pieces, laughed at my courage, and showed how highly they esteemed their colonel by spoiling, through adoration, their *petite artilleuse*.

Summer brought me back to Villers-Hellon, and there my amusements became rural without being less boisterous. The sheep-folds were full of beautiful Merino lambs, the smaller of which tranquilly suffered martyrdom from my caresses, while those who were larger answered my endearments with an energetic butt of the head. Sometimes, when my nurse had neglected to watch me, I would climb to the back of a large sheep, who, affrighted at such treatment, rubbed, shook itself, and finally pitched me into the straw, which, while it excited my childish laughter, was always the source of some tears of vexation.

Then eggs, still warm, were collected for my breakfast—the fowls sought their food at my feet—the ducklings endeavoured to swim in the pond; and there were flowers to wither and fruit to spoil. My health was very delicate, and it was forbidden to make me weep; I was therefore a happy, spoiled, and wilful child, with a good heart but a very bad head.

When I was five years old my mother gave birth to another daughter. In order that I might see this little sister, I was taken to the bedside of my mother. I found her so ugly, that I compared her to a poor little sparrow without feathers, such as had recently been given me, and I received but one kiss for my punishment. That sad, single kiss, the ordered silence, the dimness of the apartment, and the thousand attentions with which that little creature, who was not *me*, was surrounded, drew from me a tear, which trickled to the shoulder of my father, and caused me to look with no favourable eye on her who had come to be loved as much as I was beloved.

The birth of Antonine occupied much of my thoughts. I at first believed that she had come from heaven, where I had seen the stars; but again I thought they were too high for her to fall from, without being hurt. Then the midwife and accoucheur, who told me they had brought her, were neither so fair nor so beautiful as the angels of God. They spoke to me of a cabbage under which she had slept, but I did not believe them. During two days, I examined every cabbage in the garden, without finding anything of the kind; and at length, on the third day, I became convinced that my sister had come in an egg like a chicken; only her egg was much larger, and required a doctor to break it. I did not reveal my discovery to any one, but it hindered me for some time from sleeping, and made me exceedingly proud.

My aunt Garat gave birth to a daughter about the same time with my mother. The two christenings took place together. To these were added that of Hermine de Martens, who, born in Prussia, had come to France to be baptised, in order that my grandfather might be her sponsor. Her intended godmother being unable to be present at the ceremony, I was chosen to supply her place.

When I reached the church, and found myself in the midst of a concourse of peasantry, hanging on the arm of my grandfather, with a large bouquet and ribands—yes, ribands, from head to foot—my memory failed me, and the words which had been taught me for more than a month past, were obliged to be whispered to me by the schoolmaster, who had the cruelty to perform this office loudly, and without regard to the self-love of a five-years-old.

I was grievously humiliated, and afterwards, when I should have given her sweetmeats, I would not. My grandfather was vexed, but I was obstinate; and I passed from the church to a dark chamber, where I moistened with my tears some excellent delicacies, which, however, greatly contributed to make me forget my mischance.

A year later I lost my good grandmother, of whom I merely remember her caresses; her large dark eyes which always smiled upon me; that she taught me to know and to love flowers; and that she had a pretty aviary, in the neighbourhood of which it was necessary to be silent and cautious. She had not quitted her bed for a long time; she used to coax me to climb upon it; and she then amused me with long gaudy coloured ribands, which I patiently rolled up, merely for the pleasure of afterwards unrolling them.

CHAPTER II.

My grandmother was the daughter of Colonel Campton, an Englishman. When she was nine years old, and still in mourning for her father, she was deprived of her mother also.

Madame de Genlis, *gouvernante* to the children of the Duke of Orleans, was the protectress of the poor little orphan. She welcomed her on her arrival in France, and caused her to share in the instructions given to her royal pupil, Mademoiselle d'Orleans.

Madame de Valence, daughter of Madame de Genlis, attached herself to the young Hermine, added the advantage of strict affection to the gift of a perfect education, made her the partaker of her joys and sorrows, and received with her last sigh her latest thought.

My kind grandfather thus informed me concerning his marriage.

Mademoiselle Hermine Campton, at eighteen, was a sweet girl, slender but graceful; with hair blacker than the raven's wing; eyes, dove like when they were not lighted up by excitement; a *nonchalante* mouth; and a small nose

of that kind which indicates that its owner has a will of her own.

M. Collard, a friend of M. de Genlis, saw, and fell dotingly in love with her.

Having come from the plains of Gascony, poor, to the extent of having ten brothers, my grandfather was indebted to M. de Talleyrand for placing him on the road to fortune. He was handsome and elegant. Those most difficult to please, would have granted him a diploma of matrimony; so he was accepted.

Before his marriage, M. Collard had been arrested as a Girondist. The 9th Thermidor and the death of Robespierre saved him.

A contractor for the supply of the armies of the Republic under the Directory, he was enabled rapidly to acquire a fortune; being still indebted for opportunities to Prince Talleyrand, who became the godfather of his son, and who chose the beautiful Princess Borghese to become godmother on the occasion.

That delightful sister of Napoleon was then only Madame Le Clerc, and occupied the château of Mont-Gobert, near the château of Villers-Hellon, which had been purchased by my grandfather. Here the christening took place. The Prince of Beneventum, desirous of exhibiting at once his wealth and good taste, had caused to be brought from Paris a rich and elegant present, customary on such occasions, and which, of course, should consist of ribands tinted with all the hues of the rainbow; flowers pretty enough to be opposed in rivalry to those of the fields; in short, all such useless luxuries of the toilet as should belong rather to the fashion of to-morrow than to that of to-day. The packages arrived. They were undone in the saloon. All were eager to see, to admire their contents; but, lo! instead of what was expected, there were ribands of the last year's fashion, faded scarfs, and gloves large enough to hold four little hands like those for which they had been meant—with paper flowers and plaster sweetmeats! Madame de Talleyrand had caused an exchange to be made in a moment of jealousy. The despair of the godfather could not calm the disappointment of the pretty godmother, and my uncle was baptized in an atmosphere of vexation and ill-humour.

My grandfather seldom quitted Villers-Hellon except for the sessions of the Legislative bodies. He had no mere taste for anything—with him all was passion, the duration of which, however, was very unequal to its violence, and he had become a landholder with his usual ardour. During two years he planted gardens, orchards, and woods, constructed roads, and stocked warrens. Then going to Chantilly and seeing the establishments of Merinos, he was seized with *moutonomania*, which he retained for the next five years; during which all his sheds and greenhouses were converted into pens and sheep-folds, and the fields and orchards were turned into artificial prairies. The shepherd's crook became the sceptre of this new age of gold; and if the sheep were admirable, the shepherdesses were so charming that in beholding them their charge would be forgotten.

My grandmother, who liked neither sheep nor shepherdesses, drew around her a circle of neighbours and friends, brought up her children, and passed her spring in regretting Paris, and her autumn in hoping to return to it. In due time she saw her three daughters married.

My mother, the eldest, was beautiful—of that placid beauty which affords pleasure to the heart rather than to the eye; full of amenity, grace, with solid and attaching qualities, she was the favourite of her father. In 1815 she was wedded to M. Capelle, a captain of artillery.

Hermine, who was two years younger, resembled my grandmother. Nothing could be finer or more graceful than her physiognomy, except her mind. Her vivacity alone gave animation to the house of my grandfather. She, in 1817, married the Baron de Martens, a Prussian diplomatist.

Louise, the youngest, might be compared to the sweetest of moss-roses. That beautiful and laughing girl of fifteen relinquished her dolls to enact the part of Madame. She married the son of an intimate friend of my grandfather, M. Garat, Director-General of the Bank of France.

To that pleasant trio must be added my uncle Maurice, a romping, good-humoured boy, who passed his years at college, and his vacations at Villers-Hellon. My grandfather and grandmother had frequent discussions concerning the course Maurice ought to adopt, and sometimes contrived on the subject to exceed the bounds of mere conversation, and

to trespass on those of small, though amicable disputation. When the moment of positive decision arrived, however, the matter was deferred till the morrow, and thence to a future day. Thus days sped onwards, flowing into years, and my uncle alone took the part which was agreeable to him—that is to say, he did nothing.

After the death of his wife, my grandfather intrusted the care of his house to his daughters, who came alternately to people his solitude. My mother, the eldest and the favourite, was most frequently and especially called to represent her whom all regretted. Good and pious, the dispenser of the charities of her father, the amiable distributor of his cordial hospitality towards his friends, she every day became more indispensable to him; and every summer I consequently spent with her at Villers-Hellon.

That sweet little corner of Picardy is the paradise of my childhood. There I was so happy, so entirely beloved, so much spoiled! It was not alone my excellent grandfather whom I found there, nor my very good aunts, nor well-beloved cousins, nor the spring time and the flowers;—there were two old nurses assiduously careful of me and my sister, who consoled us when we were unhappy, had ever a kiss for our saddened brows, and a *bonbon* to obliterate our tears; there was the old coachman with his white horses; the kind peasants who carried us in their arms, as they had carried our mother; the little children whose bows and curtesies delighted us when returning from mass, and with whom we quarrelled afterwards in the excitement of our sports.

In the winter we returned to be near my father, who was at that period superintendent at Mézières. As far as Rheims we wept for our Villers-Hellon; but afterwards, anxious for the pleasure of again seeing my father, we were chagrined at the slowness of the horses, and experienced intolerable impatience until the moment when the drawbridge resounded beneath the wheels of our *calèche*, when the soldiers presented their arms, and we were both enclosed in the arms of the dear—the recovered absentee.

I have almost forgotten everything of Mézières, except our lone house, near the powder-magazine, a kid, who was obedient to our commands, and a charming family, with whom we exchanged frequent visits.

The Count de J—— was a big man, whom we seldom saw except in the dining-room. His wife was good and pretty, and an intimate friend of my mother. She had a little girl named Henrietta, with whom she wished me to form a friendship; but who was too childish to comprehend my seven years' attainments, and too much spoiled to become my slave. When our contests grew noisy and furious, the Viscount de J——, her uncle, would come and restore peace between us by relating to us the most beautiful fairy tales. It is to him I am indebted for the knowledge of 'The Ass's Hide,' of 'Little-Thumb,' and 'The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood.' His kindness was perfect. Some years later a kick in the chest from a horse occasioned his death while still young. I long wept for, and regretted him.

It was at Mézières that my lessons began. A serjeant-major taught me to write and to march. Every morning I repeated a lesson of sacred history and geography; and during the day I was introduced to the mysterious charms of all the quavers and semi-quavers of the gamut.

Study afforded me no great pleasure. I took advantage of the visits of our friends, to fly to the office of my father, and drag him on the ramparts; there I would race with my favourite kid; I glided delightfully along the turf-covered slopes; and when I was tired or out of breath, my father would speak to me of the little king of Rome, the beautiful imperial angel, whose portrait was suspended over my pillow, and who was nightly the object of my prayers.

CHAPTER III.

Two years had thus passed between Villers-Hellon and Mézières, when my grandfather came to see us, with my aunt De Martens and her daughters.

Hermine was fair and fresh coloured, and so perfectly rational as to be an object of comparison by no means flattering to me; I consequently soon considered her pedantic and *ennuyeuse*. Antonine, on the contrary, admired her so

highly, that she made no difficulty in sacrificing our French games for the German amusements of our cousin. They became intimately allied, and I was wicked enough to be the mar-feast of all their enjoyments.

Bertha was still under the care of her nurse, and could do nothing but cry and sleep.

One day an officer, M. P——, spoke in admiring raptures of my pretty cousins. My aunt affected modesty, and attempted to deprecate his praises, when unconsciously he exclaimed, "Oh! Madame, you cannot be too proud; did not even the owl believe her own young ones to be enchanting?" The expression enraged my aunt; and the poor man was thenceforth the owl of all the ladies.

In the following summer, at the period of the coronation of Charles X., I for the first and last time saw Prince Talleyrand. My grandfather entertained him at Villers-Hellon. The court and gardens were illuminated, and after dinner the magnificent flocks of three farms were passed in review before the windows of the saloon. That agricultural spectacle appeared to amuse the great diplomatist. It was a novelty to him, and he readily accepted for Valençay two of the finest rams from the stock.

I had so often heard of M. de Talleyrand, that I regarded him with great attention, and have him full in my mind's eye still. He had nobility stamped upon his brow, and was perfectly agreeable; though, unfortunately, it was well known that his amiability did not spring from his heart, but was subject to his will. I remember that the day after his arrival, I said to my grandfather, "Your prince even limps with elegance."* This procured me a fervent kiss, and some compliments sufficient to gratify my vanity as a little girl.

Nearly every autumn, Madame Elmore, the daughter of the celebrated Séguin, the contractor for victualling the armies of Spain, came from England to pass a few months at Villers-Hellon. M. Séguin had been intimately connected with my grandfather. For a long time they occupied two hotels in the Rue d'Anjou, separated only by a garden; and their children, who spent their hours of recreation together, formed one of those close friendships which endure through life with all their radiant reminiscences.

* M. Talleyrand was lame.

At that period, namely, verging on the fall of the Directory, M. Séguin was already immensely rich, and gave tokens of his subsequent madness by an excessive love of music, which induced him to procure for his children the most distinguished masters, all appointed, however, with the exclusive view of developing in their pupils the *musical sense*. Mlle. Zoè first opened her eyes upon the gamut, quitted a teacher of melody for a master of accompaniment, rested her fingers fatigued with a *sonata*, to shriek out some grand airs of Gluck and Mozart, and at lengh terminated her harmonious martyrdom in going to the Opera, not as a listener and spectator, but to write the most difficult passages of the score. For all of heart and of mind they possessed, the two poor children—I say two, because Abel scraped his violin while his sister struck her piano—were indebted to Madame Séguin, who trenched upon their slumbers in order to give them some smattering of religion, of history, and geography, to make them able to write two or three lines and spell a few words. Nay, I am unjust; the paternal solicitude of M. Séguin allowed them three times a week, in the intervals of their musical lessons, a professor of conjuring, of riddles, and of fortune-telling. They learned also to blow glass, and practised a little of chemistry. To reward their progress, their father gave juvenile balls for them, when, after supper, and their heads were exalted and obedience forgotten, a saloon was thrown open, in the midst of which was an immense *mère-gigogne*, from under whose petticoats peeped forth treasures of dolls, swords, foot-balls, and sweetmeats. "Go! take them, all is yours," cried the *Maitre du logis*; then the little children rushed together, overset each other; scratched and fought; cries arose, tears were shed, and M. Séguin laughed and rubbed his hands, and was delighted with the distress of the parents, the blows, the tears of these poor children, with all this infantine, stormy anarchy.

The handsome portion of Mlle. Séguin procured her many suitors. The Duc de Noailles presented himself among the number, but the bargain did not take place, the father did not agree to the amount of money required by the noble aspirant. At this period the horse *mania* having obtained a mastery over the other *manias* of M. Séguin,

he made the acquaintance of M. Elmore, whose London stables contained the best race, and the purest blooded stud horses. M. Elmore had no station in society, and little fortune; but the acutest horse-jockey could not deceive him in the age or qualities of a horse. He was an inestimable guide in procuring a stud, a redoubtable enemy against roguish dealers, and M. Séguin made him his son-in-law—from economy. Personally M. Elmore was not handsome; he had carroty locks, and did not understand two words of French; but he was a heretic, and promised to be converted.—Mlle. Zoe accepted him to secure Heaven and a husband.

Mme. Elmore was scarcely pretty, and yet she was much admired—her defects were forgotten, for her smile was charming, her eyes lively, her shape well turned and graceful, her foot delicate, and her disposition satirical—she was, in addition, a great coquet and exceedingly pious. Her husband, who possessed none of these matters, had, to make him amends, the best possible temper; he spoke French execrably; passed his days in hunting, and divided his evenings between sleep and myself.

My childhood has been so often rocked to sleep by the originalities of M. Séguin, which one of my old nurses used to tell me at night to quiet me, that I cannot pass them over in silence while I am speaking of the lively impressions of those delightful days.

M. Seguin was a very obscure, and very poor chemist when he discovered, at the moment when the Republic needed equipments for its army, the method of tanning leather in much less time than usual, and by employing, I believe, the bark of the oak. They held out the prospect of a fortune if successful, and of the guillotine in case of failure. M. Séguin trusted to his star, and fortune became his slave. He then married a noble, but poor girl, opened his house to all that Paris still contained of amiable and elegant, and became remarkable for his sumptuous extravagances. His balls were admirable, his dinners inimitable. An unambitious dining-room was first entered by his guests, in which stood a table, laden with oysters, soups, and fish. At a given signal another saloon was thrown open, and exhibited tables groaning under the most magnificent plate, and containing the most exquisite viands; and,

beyond this, the company passed onward to enjoy the dessert in a delicious apartment, perfumed with the rarest flowers, lighted with a thousand lamps, resplendent with crystal, and silver-gilt, and where all the most delicate of luxurious refinements were heaped and blended in gorgeous profusion.

M. de Talleyrand, tempted one day with a desire to see this eccentric magnificence, asked my grandfather to procure him admission to one of my friend's dinners. The wish was communicated to M. Séguin, who promised to surpass himself in order to astonish his Excellency. M. de Talleyrand and my grandfather, on reaching his hotel, were ushered into a counting-house. M. Séguin poured forth a thousand excuses—his wife was absent—he could only give them a bachelor's dinner, and they must, therefore, extend to him their indulgence. This humility came with a bad grace from the mouth of the celebrated Amphytrion; but nothing softens one more effectually than the prospect of an excellent repast. It was thought that he desired to be complimented, and accordingly compliments were not spared. At length the clock struck six, when a domestic entered, spread a napkin over the writing-table, and placed three plates and three chairs. M. Séguin went into the adjoining apartment, and returned, bearing in his own hands a bell-shaped patent saucepan, for making portable soup, explained gravely the advantages of this new process, added thereto a steak, and a piece of Gruyère cheese, and graciously did the honours of his table. My grandfather was indignant. M. de Talleyrand fasted, like a man of spirit, and not without being filled with resentment.

M. Séguin had some magnificient grounds near Paris; in which he sometimes gave *fêtes*. One day he announced a series of prizes, sports, and dances for the villagers of the neighbourhood. Above all there was to be a race in sacks, which was sure to excite much laughter among his friends, and to call forth the ambition of the peasants to gain the prize, which was a very beautiful watch. On the eve of the *fête*, he caused to be dug, in profound secrecy, near the goal at which the racers were to arrive, a ditch, about twelve feet deep, which was afterwards covered with twigs and fine gravel. The unfortunate runners, encumbered with their sacks, hurrying towards the winning post, were plunged

into the gulph. The fall was horrible. There were broken arms and fractured heads. The people would have killed the rascally proprietor, and, but for powerful influence, he would scarcely have escaped the fangs of the police.

About the same time he was embroiled with the Princess of Chimay, who occupied an hotel adjoining his in the Rue de Varennes. M. Séguin caused a mountain of barren earth to be raised in his garden, which so completely shut out the rays of the sun and the daylight from his unfortunate neighbour, that she was compelled to abandon her residence.

After the marriage of his daughter, M. Séguin took an antipathy to the world. He forbade his wife to receive even the visits of her friends; and in order to sequester himself more entirely, he had all his staircases removed, and thus rendered it necessary to use ladders to reach the upper apartments of his mansion. These proceedings were carried to such extremes, that Madame Séguin was obliged to go to her daughter in England; and her husband, no longer being able to find amusement in persecuting her, shut himself up in a little garret of his palace, where he lived with his violins, his steam-boilers, his madness, and his female porter.

Having sent away all his domestics, his splendid horses were left to wander at liberty in his garden, to live on withered leaves, and be reduced to the semblance of their former shadows. Some time before his death M. Séguin determined on selling them, and for that purpose, sent for a horse-dealer. On discussing the price, however, they could not agree; and the owner ended the dispute by causing all the noble beasts to be shot.

CHAPTER IV.

We passed the winter in Paris, and my father went to Valence, where his regiment was stationed. His absence caused me to experience a dreary void. Shut up in one of those Parisian apartments which are at the same time so pretty and so small, condemned to study grammar, history,

and geography, relieved only by an occasional walk to the Tuileries, and then, without liberty of action or movement, I became melancholy and annoyed, and consequently annoying. I was unable to take the least step without overthrowing something, the echo of which was sure to reach the ears of my mother. If I sang or danced, the whole house was shaken. Every moment I was sent from the saloon by a visitor. Antonine, who had the meekness of an angel, did not share my amusements; and, to conclude, I had an old piano-forte teacher, who tortured me with *flats* and *semi-tones*, and would not permit me to play the least air, to the detriment of my scale and exercises.

Marshal Macdonald, who was at the head of the royal establishment of St. Denis, and had well known my grandfather, advised my mother to subject my growing independence to the yoke of the Institution. Admission as a boarder was accordingly obtained for me, and I was conducted to St. Denis in the month of March. My mother, who feared the consequences of my despair, did not preinform me what was intended; but one morning bade me go with her in the carriage, took me to St. Denis, and only when the great gates of the convent had closed upon us, and we had been introduced to Madame de Bourgouing, the superintendent, was told by the latter, as she kissed my forehead, that she had now a daughter the more, and that I was destined to remain with her. It took my mother a quarter of an hour to enumerate my faults, and to give an idea of the cries and despair which might be expected from me at her departure; a scene from which she desired to save herself by avoiding leave-taking. Leaning against a window, however, immovable, dejected, I heard and understood all, and resolved to restrain the tears with which my heart was bursting.

A lady of the establishment came in search of me, took me by the hand, and from the wardrobe dressed me in a long, black, high-necked frock, a cap, a bag which it was necessary for me to carry eternally on my arm, and thick, black, and frightfully large, low shoes. When my mother beheld me thus, she kissed me, and could not refrain from weeping; while I believed that I was going to die, so much did I suffer from the thought of my imprisonment, and from the pride which suppressed my tears. At length, when

she was gone, I threw myself sobbing on the little bed which was thenceforth to be mine, stuffed the curtains into my mouth to stifle my cries, and closed my eyes that they might not rest upon my dismal garments, so unlike the gay little robes to which I had been accustomed.

I found at St. Denis the daughter of General Daumesnil, a friend of my childhood, but she failed to console me in those first moments. Mlle. Vallin, a beautiful girl, niece to my aunt Garat, and Mlle. Fleurot, an under-governess, whom I had seen at my mother's, endeavoured also, but in vain, to make me smile. My tears were dried up only by that sound sleep which pertains to the age of nine years.

My first day at school was one of such striking contrast with those of my life of independence and freedom, that it remains graven on my memory in mournful characters. I was sleeping still when the customary signal awoke the two hundred little girls of our large dormitory. My eyes opened in astonishment, and my first thought was a sad one. Marie embraced me: her bed was next to mine. She became my *cicerone*, and had in charge to make me acquainted with my new life.

After combing themselves, the pupils entered, twenty by twenty, into a dressing-room, furnished with water-pipes and a large copper wash-basin. The water being frozen, and the children fresh from their warm beds, the majority wetted only their little fingers; and when they saw me blue and shivering from the effects of the cold water, they laughed and jested concerning my fanatical notions of cleanliness.

Being dressed once more in our mournful robes, we went to mass and prayers. The latter consisted of a few words addressed to the Almighty to entreat of him goodness for ourselves and health for our friends. Then came a long prayer read from a book, in which the pope, the bishops, the deacons, the archdeacons, and every order and degree had their orisons. The youngest girls finished their sleep on their knees; those who were older repeated their lessons, or sometimes concluded a romance borrowed in secret, during their hour in church. This done, all were put into ranks, and led to the refectory to breakfast on miserable soup; and afterwards we were allowed a few moments in the cloisters until it was time to hear the classes.

Lessons were now to be learned, but those who were

friends, formed groups and chatted with each other, laughing under their books. Every one looked at me with the silly curiosity of a school-girl. Marie introduced me to several pupils, and from the first I entered into the party of the ultra Napoleonists. At lesson time I was examined. Having studied almost alone, I had hurried through my books, and knew a little of everything without having learned anything perfectly. There was considerable difficulty in classing me: but at last I was allowed to remain in the division of Marie, on my promising to go through, in my over hours, the classes below that in which I was placed. I had a facility for acquisition which rendered this an easy task to me. As I sobbed, instead of profiting by the permission to do nothing, which was granted me on my day of entrance, it was suggested that I should practise on the piano to relieve my mind. I was almost stunned on entering a hall containing fifty pianos, all being played at the same time, and making an infernal harmony of gamuts, sonatas, waltzes, exercises, romances, and cadences—every description of study, in which all kinds of music were confounded and outraged: I sat down to a piano, but the keys remained mute, and were only moistened by my tears.

At two o'clock we were summoned to dinner, and afterwards we had a long interval of relaxation in the garden. Marie, wearied with my incurable sadness, left me on a bench, where, reflecting on my slavery, I wept for my father, for Antonine, my mother, and Ursula my nurse. A pupil in passing exclaimed, loud enough for me to hear, "What a silly cry-baby!" That word aroused me; I wiped away my tears, and asked whether she had not also cried at being separated from her father?

"If you are angry, child," replied she, laughing, "go and tell."

"What am I to tell?—that you are silly and malicious? That can be no news to those of your acquaintance."

The pupil was a hypocritical and detested royalist. My answer was deemed haughty and impatient, but very justly applied, and I gained thereby one enemy and ten friends. On returning to work I was called to the superintendent, who honoured me with the most edifying remonstrances, and preached to me of personal submission, having been informed beforehand of my likings and dislikings to the minutest of my faults, and its contrary virtue.

At eight o'clock came supper, followed by another interminable prayer, and then we were dismissed to bed. A juvenile imperial council was held on one of the beds in the dormitory, to which I was admitted, and where I caught a severe cold, and secured a punishment for the morrow.

It required some time for me to comprehend my new existence, and I could never reconcile myself to it. I did not understand how to walk in a long robe; twenty times a day I forgot that it was improper to open or shut a door without a curtesy; I forgot that to have a bag hanging on the arm was another decency which a young modest girl should never omit; and lastly, I was often guilty of the unbecoming levity of descending to the refectory without having buried my head under an immense hat! If I add to all this, that I could not speak low, that I laughed without concealing my face with my writing-book, and that I constantly deranged the symmetrical line of the ranks of my class, it will be understood why I had always the mortification of wearing my hat hind side before, which was the usual punishment of one who ventured to exhibit the least independence.

In proportion as the slavery of our acts and deeds was intolerable, so the freedom of our thoughts was immense. Our governesses never conversed with us. We exchanged at our own pleasure the most falacious ideas. Our public conduct was the guarantee of our moral perfection, as our bags and our hats were of our virtues. If, however, I may judge from the recollections of ten years old, I believe that our higher studies were better cared for and better understood; and that everything taught us was thoroughly taught. We were required to render an account of all we knew; and as no useless labour was spent in attempting to make prodigies of us, girls who left St. Denis, after having passed through all their classes, were really well informed. Among other things it was a rule, that the pupils should be forbidden to enter upon the acquisition of a plurality of the ornamental arts at the same time. It was known to be impossible that any one could profitably study together music and drawing. It requires something of love to enable one to comprehend the arts, and that love divided dwindles down to mere *taste*, which produces nothing but mediocrity.

Everything in education ought, it appears to me, to have a moral object, and it is not by overloading the brain with a thousand very superficial things, that we can hope to develope the intelligence of the soul. Children are made to repeat history like parroquets, What we learn concerning Clodion is, that he had beautiful hair; of Pepin, that he was a little usurper; of one of the Philips, of Valois, that he was handsome, and of the other, that he was brave. This kind of nomenclature is as fatiguing as it is useless; but history, rightly studied, is truly philosophical. It converts nations into grand theatres, where the working of our passions is exhibited; and in acquiring a knowledge of events, we become acquainted with the men who acted in and directed them. It is thus also with music. The knowledge of country dances, and of different airs, may awaken an echo of the dance in a young head; but the sublime symphonies of Beethoven, and the divine imaginings of Mozart, penetrate to, expand, and elevate the heart.

It is not true that women must needs be trifling or superficial. If their education is solid, frivolity will be rejected; and for this it is merely necessary that girls should be taught to adorn their minds as highly as they adorn their persons; and that they should learn in what nobility and greatness of soul consists, to the end that their bright foreheads should win respect, their eyes reflect goodness and love, and that everything about them should yield a graceful interpretation of the gracious thoughts which govern them. Above all, no attempt should be made to change their original nature. Each of our faults, well directed, may be converted into a virtue. Vanity may become a noble pride, and coquetry an amiable desire to please. Soften and subdue; but if you would improve such young plants, do not forget that you must infalliably be wrong if you compel them to yield to the impure influence of hypocrisy.

But I am wandering from my twelfth year, and must return to the thoughts and recollections of the past—to the days of my childhood under the great cloisters of our ancient abbey. During the time that my mother remained in Paris, I saw her every Sunday, and those interviews were painful to me. She never came alone to see Madame Bourgouing. I was too proud to weep in her arms, for I never ceased to remember that it was her will alone which

had exiled me from all my friends. Without complaining, one may suffer for events, for indifference; but to suffer through those one loves is incessant torture. I was unjust without doubt. My mother believed that my character would yield to the slavery of social life under that severe and monastic discipline. Alas! my mind revolted instead of submitting; and under the yoke I learned better to appreciate the value, and to cherish more deeply the love of liberty. My school hours passed rapidly. Study was a pleasure rather than a task. I had ambition, and invariably occupied the highest places; but scarcely had the hour of recreation arrived when I threw off, and sometimes broke my shackles.

St. Denis was divided into two constantly hostile camps. The majority of the students, daughters of the old soldiers of the empire, venerated the idol of their fathers, and persevered in worshipping him. Several others, the daughters of emigrants, were violent royalists, and treated our deity as an usurper. The chiefs of the respective parties attacked every new comer, and taught them the songs of Béranger, or the hymns composed on the birth of the Duke of Bourdeaux. All our little legs were at the service of the strong heads of fifteen and sixteen. They carried letters, monopolized the punishments, and received for compensation a piece of tricoloured riband, an eagle, or, better still, the portrait of the little King of Rome. These things were distributed according to the services performed. Each of the elder pupils had one or more adopted daughters, a sort of slaves, who sold themselves for a little protection. I could never submit to that necessity. I served and revolted as I pleased; and when I was very sad, I went and seated myself at the foot of a large tree, which recalled to my mind one of the lindens of my beloved Villers-Hellon.

If I was very unreasonable, Marie Daumesnil took part in my wild pranks and shared in their punishment. We had everything in common between us. Our mothers had permission to see us both on their visiting days, and the same lectures were administered for the correction of our mutual faults. At night, when all were sleeping, we talked together of those from whom we were severed, of the holidays to come, of her brother and my sister; and Marie was unable to sleep without having one of my ears in her hand.

When Marshal Macdonald came to visit the establishment, I was summoned before him. He put two or three questions to me without listening to the answers, and dismissed me with a slight tap on the cheek. Madame de Bourgouing was also full of kindness towards me. She was an excellent woman, perfectly dignified with her *grand cordon* of the Legion of Honour, and occupied herself very little with the duties of her administration. She lost while I was at St. Denis a daughter-in-law whom she adored, and all her faculties were paralyzed by the grief she experienced. I remember that what pleased me most in visiting the superintendent, was the possibility of descending alone the grand stairs, and traversing, without being in rank, the long cloisters which led from our class-rooms to our apartments. I mounted the steps four at a time, and then when I was certain of being alone, I skipped and pirouetted along, and arrived with burning brow and breathless gravity, which drew upon me a thousand questions, and the addition of a sermon on propriety, and the becoming conduct of young people.

I went sometimes also to see Mlle. Fleurot, who was a novice, and very good to me. She was an amiable person, without fortune, intended to become one of the ladies of the establishment; but she quitted us at a later period, in order to conduct a private education.

Towards the month of January, I was seized with inflammation of the stomach; and my kind aunt Garat supplied the place of my mother in her numerous visits and attentions. She obtained for me a month's holiday, which I passed at her house, blessing my stomach for being so conveniently inflamed just at New-Year's day. It afforded me all sorts of pleasures. M. de Brack came sometimes to take me out for the day. Oh! how my heart beat when I leaped up beside him into his light tilbury. He carried me with him to make visits, gave me a dinner at the Café Anglais, took me to the play, and brought me back at night loaded with sweetmeats, toys, and keepsakes. I still recollect two of his visits with me. The first was to see M. Cuvier, where we were shown into a study, in which the great *savant* was half-asleep in his arm-chair, while a young and beautiful girl, his daughter, was reading to him a manuscript. I confess to my shame, that for a quarter of an hour I was kept yawning in listening to the conversation,

which ought to have interested me; and that Mlle. Cuvier was obliged to arouse me in order to make me admire all the pretty little animals in her fine garden.

The second visit was to Mlle. Mars. Having previously heard much talk of her, I was already full of admiration on entering her neat little hotel, situated, I believe, in the Rue du Mont Blanc. She was sitting in a chair—sitting as simply as the most undistinguished persons sit. She wore a large white dressing-gown, and her figure was in no respect striking. M. de Brack told her of my curiosity. She smiled, embraced me, and gave me some iced chestnuts. Greatly disappointed at having seen nothing that indicated a prodigy, I had no longer any hope but in my ears, and therefore listened attentively. She spoke, in the most delicious of all possible tones, concerning lands, speculation, funds, and the variations of their prices. I did not understand, but still listened to those sounds as to the music of an enchantress; and I seem even now to experience that sweet and painful sensation which recurs to us on hearing, under the prosaic measure of a country dance, the same affecting air with which Grisi, the evening before, drew tears from us.

During that month of recovery, I was taken to the Opera, and to the Porte St. Martin, where the *petites Danaïdes* appeared the most diverting thing in the world. But what struck me above all, and rendered me most proud and happy, was a juvenile ball at the Palais Royal. When a tall laced footman came to bring me that princely invitation, and M. de Brack, who was at my aunt's, declared that he would give me a dress *à la Victorine*, I comprehended the delights of Cinderella, who was not less the pride of her godmother than I of my dear godfather.

The happy day of the ball arrived. It was first necessary for me to bear the pain of fifty *papillotes*, which were required to make my hair curl naturally; then my pretty lace frock was put over a figure which I had squeezed into the smallest compass; but I took courage to endure when I looked in my glass; and, lastly, my shoes, which were admirable, added their torments to all the other miseries which it cost me to be fine. We reached the ball-room at the moment when the Duchess de Berry opened the ball with a quadrille. She was dressed in a white lace robe,

ornamented with white and rose-coloured feathers, and had a wreath of the same feathers on her head. Her dress, I observed, was handsomer than her person. I saw also Mademoiselle, the *grande Mademoiselle*, who seemed to me a pedant of a princess. There were, moreover, the graceful princesses of Orleans; and I danced a galopade with the Duke de Nemours. Monseigneur, however, never kept time, but trod on my toes, and was always out of place, so that I was as much fatigued as flattered by that signal honour.

On being taken back to St. Denis, my head was so full of all my pleasures, and my imagination so strongly excited, that at the end of three weeks of regrets and dreams, I was dangerously ill of a brain fever, heightened by an inflammation of the lungs. My father was written to that there was no hope; and when my mother arrived post to see me, I was insensible. In my delirium I called for her; said that her absence had killed me, and I died by her wish and through the neglect of my father. I continued thus for a fortnight. My mother was so shocked that she determined on withdrawing me from St. Denis; and the first words that reached my ears on the return of consciousness were, that I was to be restored to my life of affection and liberty.

CHAPTER V.

As soon as it was possible to remove me, I found myself free, beloved, and indulged at Villers-Hellon; forbidden to worry my poor head with study; and, by the directions of M. Marjolin, I was to have no lectures, no lessons, and not the slightest contradiction. What a lovely summer! Intrusted to the care of my nurse Lalo, I passed my days in the wood, went to visit the brave peasants, carried fruits to the reapers, and changed for their black bread the white cakes I had for luncheon. Then at evening, I returned on their waggons, hidden in the midst of their sweet smelling hay or wheat-sheaves; while my grandfather smiled at my rural joys, my mother's eyes brightened to see the glowing

colours which I recovered under the rays of the sun. Autumn brought with it Mr. Elmore, and then my enjoyments became still more lively. I was to learn riding on horseback. I still remember my first lesson. I was placed on a pretty gray mare, and was allowed to take a turn or two round the court, accompanied with the advice, the fears, the anguish of the whole household. Afterwards Mr. Elmore obtained the great favour of conducting me into the fields. He fastened my horse to his by a long cord, and said to me, "Hold fast, and do not be afraid;" then passing from a walk to a trot, and from a trot to a gallop, and from leaping a small to leaping a large ditch, made me acquainted with the delights of a rapid chase, of dangers to be encountered, and of difficulties overcome. It was a long time before I made any disclosure concerning my perilous exploits; and when they were discovered, I was so good a horsewoman that there was nothing to tremble for but the past, and I was permitted to continue my exercises.

Villers-Hellon was very gay. We had plays there, or made pleasure excursions into the woods. Many persons of fashion were there; among others M. de Lassuse, a naval captain. He was generally considered a very elegant, amiable, and intelligent man, and was exceedingly kind to me, though my friend, Mr. Elmore deemed him odious; I know not wherefore—but without doubt that he might differ in opinion with Madame Elmore.

M. de Montrond, an intimate friend of my grandfather, came also to see us for a few days. He was cheerful and agreeable; but unfortunately when he opened his mouth, I was sent from the room. It appeared that he had fled from his creditors, and that his heart had opened to old recollections when his purse closed against new debts. One fine morning, not knowing how otherwise to kill time, he took a fowling-piece, and from the window of his chamber set himself to exercise the double barrels against our innocent ducks, all of which he destroyed. My grandfather, to perfect so good a joke, ordered his cook to send nothing to table during the next six days but the poor defuncts. M. de Montrond was obliged to eat ducks, roasted, boiled, with turnips, in stews, *en suprême*, and in pâtés, till, in order to forget both the ducks and his creditors, he was driven in despair from Villers-Hellon.

One day he was asked what he would do if he had an income of five hundred thousand francs? "*Pardieu*, I should get in debt," replied he with the utmost simplicity. M. de Montrond had, with my grandfather, mixed in the best society under the Directory. They often spoke together, but in so low a voice that I was unable to hear, of Mesdames Roland, Tallien, de Genlis, and de Staël. The last was very partial to my grandfather, and used to say of him that he was the most intellectual of his brutes (bêtes).

In the month of November we went to Strasbourg. It was eight in the morning when we reached the hill overlooking Saverne. The rising sun, throwing his warm and purple rays on the frozen snows of the mountains of the Black Forest, caused their crests to glisten like pure opals on the blue robe of heaven. The vapours of the Rhine trembled at their feet in fantastic clouds, and the mysterious arrow on the steeple of Strasbourg shadowed its fixed magnificence upon this morning horizon. Like a new Jacob's ladder, they seemed to unite heaven and earth, and to bear even to the foot of our celestial Father, the cross, that symbol of all our sufferings and of all our hopes!

In the nearer distance were rich fields and handsome villages. To the right, was the chain of the Vosges, with their dark pines and gothic ruins; and at our feet, Saverne, grouped coquetishly along a pleasant slope, with its sparkling windows, forming *ogives* of fire in the midst of the cold green ivy which surrounded them, was sending the smoke from its thatched roofs to heaven, as the capricious homage of its awakening.

I was admiring with my whole heart that magnificent spectacle, when the tramp of a horse and a kiss of welcome from my father came to double my ecstasies. I mounted with him the seat of his carriage; and as we pursued our journey to Strasbourg, we rejoiced in ourselves and in nature, in the happiness of that reunion, and in that most beautiful autumn morning.

On my arrival, it was necessary to resume my studies, which had been interrupted for six months. With the roseate hue of health returned my lessons and lectures. I had a good piano-forte master; another of literature and history; an excellent military chaplain to prepare me for my first communion; and a master of arms to aid me in acquiring agility and strength.

My father devoted to me all the time he could spare from his soldiers. We used to witness at the foot of the ramparts the exercises of firing; we went out on horseback, or, when the rain detained us within doors, we practised fencing together. I was not often strong enough to parry his thrusts; but, notwithstanding, I acquitted myself with credit; and when I was the victor, when my foil had touched one of his buttons, my kind father, proud and delighted, would recount to me by way of reward, the histories of Madame Guilleminot, Madame de Bonchamp, and other heroical women.

I passed my Sundays at the house of Madame de T——, who was an intimate friend of my mother's. After making the acquaintance of her daughters, we became inseparables. That family was one of the most amiable, and at the same time, one of the most considerable in Strasbourg. Madame de T——, still charming at forty, had in her youth been greatly admired, and lively even to a folly. With her first wrinkle, perhaps in order that one change might serve for all, she became a quakeress. Her beautiful eyes no longer sparkled with love, except for heaven; and she now gained converts as formerly she had admirers. M. de T—— was a banker, neither tall nor short, thin nor stout, old nor young; and was possessed of a tolerable stock of good sense, of mind, and of heart. Mademe de T—— had an eldest daughter, who would have been called pretty if her sisters had been less so; a son, Ferdinand, who was an excellent young man. My friends were two exquisite creatures—Jenny, beautiful as our visions of queens, when we believe them all to be tall and slender, with golden hair and black eyes, was proud and scornful, and possessed sufficient originality to give her the appearance of talent, and Marie, a laughing brunette, with large blue eyes, overshadowed with a silken curtain of dark lashes, was kind, frank, coquetish, and affectionate.

We passed together our days of recreation, under the superintendence of our nurse Ursula, in a field belonging to them, which was situated about a league from the town. We would brave the frosts of winter, in order to scamper into the garden, where sometimes we swung in a light swing, as high as the tops of the poles which sustained it, at others, clambered into stilts, and raced each other through

the snow; and then, when we were almost dead with fatigue, we went and lay down within reach of the warm breathing of the beautiful Swiss cows, which filled the sheds. There we talked of the pleasures of the morrow or of yesterday, and sometimes even ventured to indulge dreams of the remote future, of husbands, balls, and little boys and girls. In our calmer moments we did some pieces of needle-work, which we sold to our families for the benefit of unfortunate children.

Antonine, still too young to be of our grand trio, was able to execute our commissions in return for the patronage of our maturer experience. She was then a charming girl, sweet, endearing, pretty, and as much spoiled by my mother as I was by my father.

My mother received us often in the evening; but the moment the clock struck nine we were sent to our chamber. My father could not endure to see us in the drawing-room like little dolls; and I myself held in abhorrence those compliments and attentions, which seemed like a piece of additional service to the poor officers who visited us.

I had become very unsociable, not from timidity alone, but from pride at discovering the insignificance of my twelve years, and from my habitual indifference to all whom I deemed incapable of loving me for myself. Among those who did so, I must not omit the son of General Neigre, a lieutenant of infantry. When my mother went out of an evening, he would come to see us, change his sword for an apron, make for us excellent sweatmeats, and play at hide-and-seek, or blind-man's buff. Then we turned everything upside down, scaled the highest cupboards, or crammed ourselves into the most secret corners. What agitation and excitement was it when a footstep approached, when a breath was felt on our brow, when our eye caught the glance of another! What outcries, what laughter, when an unavoidable fall extended on the floor the poor blind one, who had bent too eagerly to seize its prey! What delight when my father, who did not much mingle in society, returned unperceived to embrace us, and poor Colin Maillard,* seizing a riband or handkerchief, which we had fastened to that kind parent, cried, "I hold Marie!" when he held only the

* In France, the blindfolded person in blind-man's buff is so called.

Colonel! Oh, those delightful nights! oh, those happy days!

Nearly every morning M. Neigre sent to us his large dog with a present delicately suspended from his mouth of some excellent cakes, and his attendant, who came to inquire after the health of Madame Neigre (Antonine). My sister climbed the knees of the redoubtable messenger and plucked his beard, as a prelude to the time when she should be able to pull the long moustaches of her husband; while I did the amiable to the dog. My politeness usually extended to the gift of a glass of milk to the beast, and a glass of wine to the man.

Antonine and I experienced considerable regret concerning our friend. He was put under arrest during a fortnight; and lo, wherefore! On Christmas Eve, the good citizens of Strasbourg hang from their windows the poultry they intend to devour at the grand festival. While the superb turkeys swing heavily from the windows of the wholesale merchant, the lean duck, hung at the casement of a poor family, is the sport of the December wind. That year, during the night, some mischievous person caused a little confusion among the consecrated birds. The poor pullet had become in the morning a gorgeous turkey, and no complaint was raised; but where the turkey had dwindled into a meagre pullet, loud and angry voices were uplifted against the wrong doer; and as our incredulous age is more apt to believe in the freaks of a sub-lieutenant than in the malicious agency of evil spirits, M. Neigre was consigned to prison.

That fortnight was a long one. In order to prove to our poor exile, however, that we were incapable of forgetting him, we ate dry bread for luncheon, and afterwards sent to him the little pot of *confitures de Bar* which had been assigned to us. Then at the promenade, we chose the deserted rampart which overlooked the windows of his place of confinement, and expressed to him, telegraphically, with our arms, the regrets of our hearts. All these things are afar off, yet still they are present with me.

Speaking of Christmas, there rests still in my memory a pleasant moment which the rejoicings of that period bring with them in that old Alsatian city. Several days before, the square of the Cathedral is covered with stalls furnished with every species of merchandize. Parents preserve an

air of mystery, and children become sages, knowing that the good little Jesus is about to be born again for them, and that through him their most beautiful dreams will be realized. They no longer sleep, but count the hours, the minutes; and when the grand night arrives, three or four generations mingle their gaiety and their vows. A signal is given, a door is opened, and all are struck with amazement.

In the midst of a large saloon is reared a fir-tree, with its foot buried in an enormous cake, and its top reaching to the ceiling. A thousand little tapers sparkle amid its dark needle-shaped leaves; thousands of *bonbons* reflect them in the crystal angles of sugar-candy; beautiful little confectionary cherubs seem playing in the branches of the miraculous tree, and exhibiting ribands and streamers inscribed with scriptural devices and maxims, to the astonished children below, who gaze with expanding eyes, and cease not to marvel.

Around the tree are grouped tables lighted with as many tapers as their owner numbers years, and laden with beautiful *surprises* which have been saved for him. Here are dolls, toys, sweetmeats; there eye-glasses, a bible, the portrait of a dear absentee; on the left, a gun, a light riding-whip; and on the right, love tokens, ribands, and flowers. Everywhere is joy, ecstasy, thanks, and kisses without measure or end.

Among the friends of my father, the best of my friends was Major Coger, an excellent man, who mourned the loss of his wife, trained canary birds, and loved us with all his heart. We went sometimes to take luncheon at his house, surrounded by five-and-twenty canaries, who enjoyed their freedom in the saloon. There were several beautiful little matron birds who with great anxiety strove to protect their nests even against our looks. There were also grave patriarchs who sang from earliest dawn, coquettes who scornfully crushed their grains of millet and moistened their sharp beaks in a drop of pure water; and full grown birds who feigned to die on being touched with a blade of grass, tapped gently upon the clock when asked the time, plumed their wings, flew on to the shoulder and showered kisses without number on their master.

We sometimes also saw Colonel Lechesne and his wife; they were kind and indulgent, and had children nearly of

our age, who, being sub-officers in my father's regiment, were always at our command, and obedient to our slightest wishes.

Eugene and Prosper came of an evening to give us lessons in writing; which ended, we passed to fencing, told stories to Antonine, or played at riddles, which Ursula always admired hugely without ever being able to solve them.

CHAPTER VI.

In the spring we returned to Villers-Hellon. I had now to attend for the first time at the communion, so that my time was more seriously occupied than formerly. I went frequently to church, learned my catechism, sacred history, and the gospel. My mother relinquished to me the visiting of the poor, where assistance was needed, or there were pain and grief to assuage. My grandfather at the same time made me his almoner, and I was very happy in being loved and blessed in his name. The day of the *Fête-Dieu* was fixed for my appearance at the altar, to undergo that great change when the child was to give place to the young woman, and when I was to be initiated to the mysteries of heavenly things, before opening the gates of life. Already the hour of duty was approaching, perhaps that of error. My heart beat faster, its impulses grew stronger; the Christian virgin must be protected by a shield in her passage through the world; and the religion which has cradled her infancy, takes her soul, weak and pure, deposes therein its truths, its laws, and gives her a refuge against the joys, the sufferings of the world, which is about to claim her as its own.

On the morning of that solemn initiation, how radiant was the sun—how profound was my emotion! My mother attired me herself in the white robe of communicants, and placed in my hair a sprig of jasmine—symbol of those innocent thoughts, and of that faith which a priest the evening before had instilled into my heart. Then, before the solemn chimes from the steeple had called us to partake the

blessing from on high, I bowed my knees before her, and she wept and blessed me.

The church was adorned with evergreens. The altar was hidden under clusters of lilac, acacia, and other shubs, with garlands of blue-bells and white daisies, twining their odorous stems around the tapers of the tabernacle; while the young communicants, trembling under the folds of their veils, sang the praises of the Lord.

I am unable to express the mysterious agitation which took possession of me when the priest raised the chalice above our heads, and when the clouds of incense and of flowers saluted the Redeemer of the world! My knees bowed, my eyes closed, and at the moment when the communion came to convey the Deity into the sanctuary of my heart, it seemed that an angel touched me with the tip of his wing, and that I was about to die!

That great act of my life remains graven in characters of fire on my memory. Beside me I perceived the good and indulgent pastor of Villers-Hellon, who, though still young, had the tolerance of experience and of virtue. He never combated with words the somewhat Voltairian ideas of my grandfather; but by his actions, he induced him to love religion, to respect its ministers, and almost to forget the sceptical ideas of the eighteenth century.

About the month of October, Charles X. made a progress through Alsace, and a letter from my father recalled us to him at that period. The *fêtes* prepared for the king were magnificent. The wealthy Alsatian peasants, in their best costume, mounted on the small horses of their mountains, galloped around the royal carriage. Their wives and daughters, decked in all their rich laces and pleasant smiles, with their large blue eyes and their long fair hair, followed in light carriages; and at intervals, the cannon mixed its hoarse voice with the pious sounds of the bells and the hurras of the people.

At the door of the palace, a number of young girls presented to the king, with vows and flowers, the keys of his good city of Strasbourg. In the evening there was a magnificent ball. The windows and granite battlements of the cathedral were illuminated, and the Vosges sparkled with crests of fire on all the dark embrasures of their feudal ruins. Everywhere there was nothing but enthusiasm and love—

every eye beamed with eternal devotion. Rejoice, oh princes! rejoice while you may, in these popular adulations! When the hour of exile and misfortune shall sound, you will look in vain for the smoke of that incense, for a regret on the brows, or a tear in the eyes, of your flatterers!

My aunt Garat came to pass a week with us, on quitting the camp at Luneville. That was a week of festivity and joy; for my father, adoring his beautiful sister, wished to surround her with pleasures, fêtes, and admirers. The elegance, beauty, and frank gaiety of my aunt, revolutionized all the unoccupied hearts of Alsace; and at her departure, there was nothing but regrets and unhappiness.

The sojourn of my aunt, brought us acquainted with a pretty little female, who was married to M. C. G. She was a graceful white and red wax-doll, opening and closing her eyes, saying papa and mamma; and even venturing, when the great resource of her intellect was pressed by her husband, to hazard a few very gentle and amiable phrases which had no pretension to meaning, but which exhibited the docility of the mechanical spouse.

Never have I seen the fanatic love of order reign so despotically as in that young wife. She wasted more time in arranging than in living. Madame G. had a delightful apartment; but no one must presume to step upon the carpet, to repose on the ottomans, or to turn over the leaves of one of her handsome gold and silk covered books. She covered all those luxuries with gauze and paper, passed her days in a dressing-room, seated in a straw-stuffed chair, and reading a few old school-books. Dancing rumpled her light dresses; so she renounced dancing. Emotion was calculated to wrinkle her forehead, and banish the freshness from her cheek; so she drove from her all feeling and thought. In short, surrounded with all the enjoyments of life, she set her pride and felicity on preserving them from the pressure and ravages of time; and would have been perfectly happy if it had been possible for her to enclose in glass-cases her husband and children.

We went to pass the last fine days of autumn at the country house of M. de T——, who had a small pavilion situated on the banks of an islet, in which he passed his hospitable and cheerful life. We returned sometimes to Strasbourg for our lessons, and every evening my father

came to forget in our society the solitude of his days. I have waited for him whole hours by the side of the road, when he would give his horse to his domestic, and we would return on foot, I hanging on his arm. I used to embrace him a thousand times, in order to keep him as long as possible entirely to myself, and to retard his arrival—always too hasty, judging from my heart.

One day, alas! I awaited him in vain. His servant came alone. He went in search of my mother, who instantly set out, pale, and without embracing us. All that night I slept not. In the morning the carriage was ready for my sister and me; and when I asked wherefore, we were told that my father was ill, and desired to see us. At length, little by little, Ursula told us with tears that he had been hunting, that his gun had burst in his hand, and that he was seriously wounded.

On reaching Strasbourg, I wept with so much despair, that it was necessary for me to remain an hour at the door of my chamber, in order to stifle my cries. My poor father heard and called me. I threw myself on my knees at his bedside. "Marie, my child," he said to me, "you depress me by making me doubt your courage." He leaned his head on mine. I felt a tear, and comprehending that it was an adieu, my heart was broken! I know not what took place after that. When my senses returned to me, I was stretched on the bed of Madame de T——. I desired to arise to return to my father; but his emotion had been too strong, and the doctor had forbidden my presence. Oh! how I detested the impotence of my reason to govern my despair. I was far from my well-beloved sick one; and that through my own fault. Two days of anguish thus passed. On the third, in the middle of the night, we were taken to the bed of my mother. All was ended!

My God! what profound grief for a first grief! Why, so young, was my stay and my guide snatched from me? Why!—when you had prepared for my life such harsh and rugged paths? Did you fear that with him the earth would be too dear to me? Was he taken to Heaven in order that he might lead thither my thoughts and my hopes? Lord! I am unable to sound the depth of thy designs; but for pity, if I have not failed under the burden of my cross, restore to me my father in your eternity!

CHAPTER VII.

After my misfortune, a gloomy darkness presided over my thoughts. Everything presented to me an image of death. All that I had loved with my father and by my father had become subjects of grief and affliction to me. My eyes sought his eyes; every door that opened made me start, as in the times when I had expected him, and my tears were my sole resignation. When I was alone, I reviewed in my heart the words and counsels of my father. I promised that I would be worthy of him; strong, though a woman, to soar above the sordid vanities and narrow exigencies of society. I promised him that I would be great and noble, not merely according to the standard of the world, but according to his ideas, and the recollection of his views, which became my conscience; I henceforth took this device for mine—"Do what you ought, come what may."

Sometimes I took courage. I studied, and endeavoured to wrestle with the feeble and bad traits of my character. Then my grief reawakened all at once, and I was astonished that I could still live; I was indignant to see so many existences still stirring around me when he was dead—he whom I loved so well!

M. Collard, my uncle, came at once to my mother, and wished to take us back to Villers-Hellon; but wretched money matters—which are always the miserable attendants of the deepest sorrows—caused it to be decided that we should remain at Strasbourg until spring. I greatly loved Marie and Jenny; all the family of T—— were very kind to me; but that decision nevertheless made me desolate. The places where I had been happy with my father had become insupportable to me. When they spoke to me of him, my heart was like to break; when they were able for a moment to cause me to forget him, I revolted against my obliviousness. The only person who felt as I felt was Major Coger. He had been appointed our domestic guardian, and when we looked at each other, when he embraced me, I knew that the same cherished regret lived between us, from our mutual regards and kisses.

Meanwhile, my whole life was not spent in tears. Time, if it fails to cure, will vary our impressions in spite of ourselves; and in its continual progress, as day succeeds day, it gradually restores to us our old habits, duties, and studies. My grief, more collected, took its sanctuary in my heart, and the smile of youth was already reappearing on my lips. But still a burst of gaiety wounded my recollections; and sorrow at such times returned in greater strength. Then I wept for him and for myself, and contemned the condition of forgetfulness appertaining to our poor human nature. The sight of the regiment made me ill; and the sounds of military music seemed to me a cruel irony, which disturbed the repose associated with the grave of my poor father.

My uncle Maurice remained with us two months. It was desired that he should marry Cécile de T——. He found her amiable; but to retard the horror of a decision, he requested time, that he might learn to know and appreciate, and then love her. My uncle passed his days at the residence of Madame de T——; and when he had for some time followed his sentimental *ámie* Cécile among the stars, he came to play with us, like a school-boy who had finished his task. Desirous of subduing the pride of his future sister-in-law, my uncle occupied himself especially with Jenny, embraced her tenderly, stole locks of her hair, teased and provoked her, and in short, took to loving her so well, and loved Cécile so badly, that the marriage was entirely broken off; and then there were two eyes sadly reddened for a long time.

All our lessons were in common. We had, as our master in history and for style, a young Protestant minister, full of indulgence and talent. I remember still the excellent lessons of M. Schmidt, his gravity during the time of study, and his complaisance when the hour of freedom struck.

My mother never went out, and we very little. I did not desire to do so; for, if in the street, I met one of our old gunners, who, with an air of sadness, raised his hand to his cap, my tears gushed forth in spite of me, and I was ashamed of that public emotion.

About this time I remarked among the visitors whom my mother received, an elegant, amiable, and handsome young man, full of that chivalrous spirit which might be said to transform the man of our day into a hero of the

middle ages. M. de Coëhorn had so much heroical vigour in his imagination, that he was placed far above or below actual life; and he disdained to translate his heart by actions conforming to the usage of our vile earth. Those who had judged him by his works would have deemed him absent, weak, and egotistical; but in thought he was full of energy, love, and self-denial. He spoiled Antonine, and was agreeable and attentive to me whenever I entered for a minute during the time of his visits; and I *guessed* that he was in love with Cécile, and that a marriage would soon stifle a remembrance.

I slept sometimes on a couch in my mother's chamber. One night, when I was unable to sleep, I heard her speaking. I raised myself to ask if she was unwell. She was dreaming—a name fell from her lips, and a horrible possibility entered my heart. I passed the remainder of the night in inexpressible anguish. At length, however, I revolted against my suspicion, and resolved to see with my own eyes before speaking or suffering further.

The same afternoon M. de Coëhorn came to pass the evening at Madame de T——'s. We were seated around a work table. M. de Coëhorn began writing on some visiting cards, which he passed to Cécile de T——, who handed them to my mother, and afterwards became the agent of her answer. That action, which would have appeared to me so simple on the preceding day, appeared decisive at that moment. I grew pale, and hastened from the room in order to conceal my tears. Madame de T—— came after me, took me in her arms, and embraced me for some time without speaking When my tears were somewhat assuaged, she told me that she understood the cause of my grief; that she had been the sincere friend of my father, and was pained like me to see him forgotten, that my mother was wrong, but that it was necessary to pardon her, as her heart was affected. I related to Madame de T—— my discovery, my presentiments, my fears; and she was so kind and so indulgent, that I went to sleep, praying to God for both her and myself.

The next day I went with my nurse Ursula to find the abbé of the regiment, who loved me as if I had been his daughter. He pitied my sufferings, but blamed me for presuming to judge my mother, saying, that "my good

father would be displeased with that feeling, and that I ought to be gently resigned, and to hide even my tears." On my return, and as I was going to fling my arms around my mother's neck to request at once the truth and her confidence, I was stayed in an ante-room by hearing my own name pronounced by Madame de T——, who said to my mother:—"Marie is in despair; she does not like Eugène; her pride revolts against your marriage. You will be able to subdue her character only by sending her away from you."

"It would afflict me to come to a separation," replied my mother.

"Well, my dear Caroline, believe me, the love of your young spouse will not endure those two living remembrances of the past."

I was unable to hear more; the world stood revealed to me. I comprehended in that language of the "friend of my father," all that society contains of falsehood and egotism, and resolved to conceal my pangs from Madame de T——.

Not daring to speak to my mother, and unable to exist under that weight of sorrow and rancour, I wrote to her all that was passing in my mind. She came to seek me, told me that she loved me; that she would love me always, and that she had spoken of all to M. de Coëhorn, who had declared that he would not consent to my being sent away, and that he hoped one day, not to be my father, but my best friend. He spoke to me himself openly of the future! I confessed to him all that I felt. He was not chagrined, but, on the contrary, told me that I had gained upon his esteem, and desired me to call him Eugène, in order to avoid a tenderer name, which it would have made me ill to use, as well as the word "Monsieur," which he disliked.

I have spoken in great detail of these events, because they operated decisively on my life, in forming, by their severity, my character and my creed. The death of my beloved father had brought me acquainted with sorrow: Madame de T—— had taught me what was society. I felt myself isolated from the world. Affection and duty made it a law to me to conceal my secret afflictions, I was unable to tell my mother what I suffered; and I could not confide it to my most intimate friend.

Though never able to subdue my first emotions, I learned gradually not to allow my griefs to press on those around me, but shrouded them in the depths of my soul. I shared my joys with those whom I loved, and wept with the unhappy; but I should have been ashamed to have been surprised with a tear on my eyelid when it flowed for myself. My pride, habitude, and will, rendered me strong and collected when the storm came; and if my brain could not be constrained, my mouth had always a smile to reassure my friends, and to preserve me from the pity of the indifferent.

The spring which was to restore us to Villers-Hellon arrived. I ardently desired to quit Alsace; but the adieu which it was necessary for me to take of the cold stone which rested above my father, seemed cruel and almost beyond my strength. My grandfather received us with double affection. He seemed to desire that we should love him as well as the father who had brought us up; and for me, I was anxious to repose on him the thousand cares and tendernesses, which, until the day of our mourning, I had divided between my two fathers.

Lalo and Mamie spoke to me of him who was no more, with tears and regret. I found again his horses, which had become favourites of the good Briquet, my grandfather's coachman; and his dog, which sought him and whined when we pronounced his name. In all this there was a small alloy of evil among much that was good.

I then resumed my life of activity, and my mother occupied herself seriously with our education. She had unalterable patience, in the continuance and strictness of her lessons. I loved my mother exceedingly, but I also feared her a little, and, above all, I dared not express to her my affection. When I would have clung round her neck, and covered it with my kisses, she would say, "No exaggeration, Marie. The best proof of tenderness which you can give me will be to correct such faults as give me pain." This was perfectly wise, but it froze me; and I became less free without being less passionate, less independent, or less impertinent—three kinds of offence of which I was frequently guilty, in despite of myself.

M. de Coëhorn came after us to Villers-Hellon. He made me labour to acquire German, and showed himself

the same indulgent and tender friend as at Strasbourg. We had races on horseback, and some long promenades in the fields. He explained to me the beauties of poetry, to which, until then, I had remained an entire stranger; and told me of the noble, but Utopian visions of German philosophy,

About the month of August my grandfather had the happiness to receive at his house the family of Orleans, towards whom he bore the greatest love and veneration. With what care and *coquetterie* was our dear little château made worthy of that honour! A first arch of green turf marked the boundary of the property; a second reared its green colonnades on high from the avenue. The battlements of the court were hidden under festoons of leaves; the flocks were picturesquely disposed over the pastures which bordered the road; and the population in their holiday dresses were grouped along the passage of the illustrious guests. The interior of the house was strewn with flowers, and the escutcheons and cipher of Orleans, formed of the blue-bells and daisies of our fields, were supported by wreaths of oak and roses, which wafted their perfume into the dining-room and saloon.

The sun arose brilliantly, gilding the rich corn fields, and our preparations for the fête. About ten it was veiled with a light cloud; at eleven the cloud had become large and gray; we went from the window to the barometer and back, to confirm our fears and hopes; till at last, with the first thunder clap and a heavy rain, the family of Orleans made its entry, soaked and splashed with dirt, into our little Villers-Hellon, recently so coquettish, but now ashamed of its sullied robe of flowers and festivity. The Princes travelled in a large omnibus, which was really magnificent. The Duke and Duchess of Orleans arrived a little wet, but without the least shadow of vexation. The Duchess had the sweetness of an angel, and bore on her brow those high virtues, which, after causing us to admire the woman, have made us venerate the Queen. The Princesses were amiable and pretty, but a little satirical; and the young Princes de Joinville and Aumale were merely royal marmots, still under the rod of their tutor. Mademoiselle d'Orleans, who came also, completed the gratification of my grandfather, of whom she, above all, was the idol.

After breakfast their Highnesses, without fear of the rain, taking advantage of a gleam of sunshine, made the tour of our gardens and farms. They admired with great indulgence the handsome trees, the capital roads, and the flocks, and bestowed some approving words upon our pretty Swiss dairy. Everywhere on their passage they were surrounded with vivats and benedictions, and appeared happy to see those transports of love, which were the faithful echoes of the profound devotion of my grandfather.

During breakfast a singular scene transpired. The schoolmaster of Villers-Hellon, wishing to approach the Princes, had obtained of my old nurse an ancient dress, formerly worn by my grandfather, and having converted the pantaloons into breeches, he believed that he had metamorphosed the whole into a very fashionable livery. He looked, nevertheless, very ridiculous, but was fortunate enough to be allowed by my grandfather to mingle with the valets-de-chambre, who were to serve at table. Our grave master having, therefore, a napkin under his arm, looked with all his eyes, and listened with both ears; when suddenly, the Duke of Orleans asking for drink, he rushed forward, made a perilous and triumphant slide over some crockery-ware, and fell at the feet of his astonished Highness. On relating the feeling of enthusiasm which had occasioned the metamorphosis, and the fall of that firm supporter of the alphabet, he had the signal honour of being exclusively permitted to quench the thirst of the royal and popular throat.

CHAPTER VIII.

Autumn brought back with it our hunting parties and our English friends, with long rides on horseback, evenings at the fireside, and all the poetry of lingering foliage and the last fine days. Villers-Hellon, nevertheless, did not regain its gaieties and its intimate re-unions. The marriage of my mother drew nigh. It was no longer a mystery, but still it was spoken of in whispers. A general embarrassment always accompanied that subject of conversation; during

which, my grandfather would call my sister and me to the side of his arm-chair, take our heads under his arms, and play with our hair, in order that he might arrest, by a barrier of gentle caresses, the words which made us sad. The marriage was generally blamed; and I especially felt wounded in the most cherished religion of my heart, at witnessing the expression of the new affection of my mother. I suffered again from that mute reprobation of society which condemned her; and though I exhibited a lively smpathy with M. de Coëhorn, I had afterwards bitter pangs of remorse, and asked pardon of my poor and beloved father, till that continual struggle became an insupportable torment to me.

The wedding-day was a sad one. We were required to assist at the ceremony, without allowing a tear to steal from our hearts to our eye-lids; to relinquish our mourning, when we had become doubly orphans. We were expected to smile at that consecration of forgetfulness—to smile on abdicating our share of the heart of our mother, in order that a stranger might reign there. M. de Coëhorn was a protestant; the religious ceremony consequently took place in the saloon, where the work-table served for an altar; a gentleman dressed in black gave a coldly-learned sermon, and afterwards a simple benediction. Ought I to avow it? I was glad of that miserable ceremony—glad that my dear little church of Villers-Hellon was not used; that the tapers of its altar remained without flame; its censor without incense—glad that the great crucifix, the angels, the virgin, the tabernacle, were not despoiled of their shrouds for that week, to bless the forgetting of my father.

When I was shut up alone in my chamber, I took the portrait of my dear regretted one. I covered it with my kisses, and promised that I would love him as much in heaven as on the earth. From that day I never pronounced that sacred name before my mother. I enshrined my treasure in the most secret recesses of my mind; and never permitted it to escape my lips, except on meeting with one of the brothers in arms, or one of the soldiers of that beloved father, and exchanging with them old remembrances and regrets.

We quitted Villers-Hellon, in order to take possession of the little château of Ittenwillers, and our own family, for a

family to which we were indifferent, and strangers. Antonine, still too young to understand the sufferings and things of the heart, had forgotten the past, and lived perfectly happy in the midst of many recreations, much liberty, and many dogs, cats, and birds. She cared very little for Eugène, whom she did not love, and who loved not her; and she sought refuge from his lectures, in the indulgence of my mother.

I was fourteen years old; but had always been exceedingly childlike in my actions; though sometimes I was sufficiently old in my thoughts. After having passed hours in leaping over the park ditches, running across the pastures after a butterfly, an insect, or for nothing, all at once I have become sad and motionless, The sight of my mother, leaning on the arm of M. de Coëhorn, made me ill. I was jealous for my father, of his happiness. When questioned, I made no answer; or was impertinent, being unable to tell the truth; but being punished or exiled to my chamber, I consoled myself with the proud conviction that I was suffering for my father. Usually, M. de Coëhorn obtained pardon for me. He laughed at my indomitable character; teazed me, permitted me to tell him everything in order to avenge myself; and played with me like a child, till frequently we became so noisy, that my mother was compelled to fly, or to banish us from the room.

We led a very solitary life. My mother and M. de Coëhorn experienced too much happiness in each other to seek the world—to forget themselves in order to please others. They were wearisome when not alone, living in themselves and for themselves. We saw only a few persons of the family of Eugène; his mother, good and virtuous, who had converted each of her habits into a little virtue, in order that she might have the right of neither derogating from nor sacrificing them to her neighbour; his eldest sister, married to M. de Bussière, full of sweetness and grace; and his two other sisters, whom I loved, and came to love still more eventually, for they were already amiable young persons, while I was merely a child. It needed time as well as experience to assimilate our hearts and ideas; and above all our tastes and habits.

Missing all the sweet distractions of Villers-Hellon, our studies were more closely followed; though I still retained

that unfortunate independence which rendered ordinary duties at a set time odious—nearly impossible to me. During the morning, which was devoted to acquiring lessons by heart, I had the headache, was fatigued—indolent. I read through my book, but knew not the few pages which I was required to know; indeed I was never able to recite prose word for word. Reproaches and constantly recurring punishments were unavailing to give me the memory of a parrot. It was the same with music. I adored it, and yet when it was necessary to labour, watch in hand, at brilliant variations, full of difficultes and void of harmony, I became a mere machine of crotchets and quavers, studying without relish and without method. A single occupation remained a favourite one, though compulsory. It was that of making extracts from my readings, and writing imaginary letters to form my style, and which served me as vehicles to tell my mother what I dared not tell her face to face. According to the disposition of my mind at the moment of writing, those letters were sportive, serious, affectionate, impertinent, satirical, or sad; but some thoughts concerning those whom I loved, and which I would have concealed, having been recounted by my mother, and turned into ridicule as eccentric, foolish, and extravagant, that method of making a confidant was closed, or at least limited to me. My mother never combatted one idea with another. When she was pleased with me, and I would repeat something that had not common sense, she would say to me, laughing, "Be quiet, little original! Embrace me; be wise, and do not philosophize." When, on the contrary, I had done anything to call forth her displeasure, she would tell me, with soverity, that "having such false ideas, I ought to have sense enough to hide them, and that I should go and reflect on that in my chamber."

I understood all the charms of reading, to which I devoted all rainy days, and nearly every Sunday. The book for which I had the strongest predilection, was Voltaire's 'History of Charles XII.' My cheeks reddened, and my heart beat quick and high when I read of all the victories of that hero, and I with difficulty restrained a tear on arriving at his defeats and his death. The memoirs concerning Napoleon were never able to satisfy me. The incense given to my *demi-god* was not pure enough; it seemed to

me improper that any should presume to judge his actions—cruel and odious, that he should be blamed in his reverses. The campaign of Russia, by M. de Ségur, made me sad and sick. It would have been impossible for me to read it twice. I was fond of Racine, more partial to Corneille, but loved Molière above all. 'Paul and Virginie' wearied me to death. Among discoverers, Fernando Cortez, Pizarro, and the buccaneers and pirates, sometimes reappeared to me in my dreams.

I never occupied myself with politics. I knew that at the Tuileries there was a throne, on that throne a king; and that the king had ministers, or more properly minds to act while his own was stagnant. Suddenly the cannon of July echoed over the Vosges, and the press sent among us the bulletins of a nation of heroes. It was incredible—sublime! In three days the work-people, young men, and children had avenged liberty, overturned the throne, and restored to France her tri-colour. They destroyed with one hand and protected with the other. Without restraint in the fight, they grew noble and calm after the victory. As they had braved death, they also braved corruption, and laid down their arms, after having won the pomps and riches of the world, before even thinking of their bread for the morrow. What great days! what glorious men! It seemed that God had created them expressly that their deeds might give its noblest page to our history.

That revolution, that glory, caused me to comprehend the liberty of the people, the love and pride of patriotism. Louis-Philippe became king; all the sympathies of my family congratulated his election, though to me he seemed scarcely young enough for our young France. I could have desired a little war and some grand victories. At the tribune the orators of the left won my admiration; but, in short, my head was exalted, and my ideas became so republican, that my mother thought it prudent to interdict to me the journals, and to forbid me occupy myself with politics; without being able, however, to efface the deep impression which those great events had left in my mind.

CHAPTER IX.

In the month of October, my grandfather, who had never passed a whole year away from my mother, recalled us so earnestly to him, that it was necessary for M. de Coëhorn to quit Alsace, his agricultural operations, and his family, in order to take us to Villers-Hellon. The winter was pleasantly passed there. We—Antonine and I—were beloved and spoiled. It was desired to pay us with large interest the debt of caresses which had been accumulating for a whole year. My mother, being under medical treatment, did not leave her arm-chair; M. de Coëhorn, therefore, charged himself with nearly all my lessons, and we had long rides on horseback, or long walks on foot together. Sometimes even we had small hunting parties, in which I was the spectatress of his high achievements. M. de Coëhorn was as a brother to me, and laughed at my independence and simplicity. With him I could venture to tell all that was passing in my mind, to express my fondness for a strange idea, and my indignation against those which are received. He was amused to see me so childish or so philosophical, initiated me into all the reveries of German poesy, and afterwards laughed at my fifteen years for endeavouring to reach alone those brilliant and fantastic stars.

In the spring, my mother gave us a charming little sister. She put her into my arms, and desired me to love and protect her, and I promised with all my heart to do so. Though I was jealous, for the remembrance of my father, of the affection exhibited by my mother towards M. de Coëhorn, I should have been ashamed to have experienced the same feeling against a poor little baby.

I have not yet spoken of the delightful neighbourhood of Villers-Hellon, though it ought to be known, in order to comprehend all the pleasures, all the friendly enjoyments, which were united in that happy little spot of earth.

Not far distant—about half a league—is situated the château de Long-Pont. Strangers admire its tall and picturesque ruins, its arched cloisters, the beauty of its waters,

and the extent of its park; while those who have the pleasure of being received there as friends, forget those natural beauties for the noble inhabitants who are the soul of the place. The Viscount and Viscountess de Montesquiou have a large fortune, and are richer still in virtues, happiness, and their illustrious birth. They often abandon Paris for Long-Pont, which they love as their creation, or as a little Eden which they have formed for their only son. I believe that Fernand will be worthy of inheriting that beautiful retreat, and will deserve the love and the blessings which the benevolence of his parents will have gathered around him.

Madame de Montesquiou was greatly attached to my grandfather, not merely as a friendly neighbour, but from an assimilation of heart and mind; and she in turn was the idol of my grandfather, who put his eighty years in adoration at her litte feet, which were so graceful, that she might have contested the insolently exclusive reputation of small feet claimed by the Chinese, and before her large eyes, which were sweet as those of Providence. M. de Montesquiou was a grave, serious, well-informed man, who was wholly occupied with the education of his son, and the embellishment of Long-Pont. He had still leisure, however, to be an excellent neighbour, and a host perfectly agreeable and hospitable.

Further off in the forest were Montgobert, belonging first to General Le Clerc, then to the Princess of Eckmühl, and lastly to Madame de Cambacérès, whose pretty person bore testimony to her relationship to the Borghèse family; Valsery, a charming property belonging to an old friend of my grandfather; St. Rémy, to M. de Violaine, superintendant of forests, and father of a beautiful bouquet of girls and a single boy; and lastly, Corcy, an eccentric little chateau of as strange a construction as was the mind of its occupant, Madame de Montbreton, daughter of a flour-factor of Beauvais, and wife of one M. Marquet, whose father had been—I have heard say, *valet-de-chambre*, but I wish for politeness to write—*steward* of some great nobleman. She had been imprisoned during the *Reign of Terror*, and, founding her nobility on that persecution, wished to be not only a poor but a noble victim. In order to adorn the name of Montbreton, taken

or found, I know not which, she purchased, under the Empire, with her beautiful floury farthings, the title of Countess, and at a later period obtained for her husband the place of master of the horse to the Princess Borghèse. At the return of the Bourbons, she glided into the royalist ranks, became a grand lady, had young lady companions from several quarters, forced ancestors upon all her little dogs, and embroiled herself with my grandfather, whose yeomanly rank and liberal opinions were to her insupportable. At the revolution of 1830, she fled from Paris, and recovering, under the strong influence of fear, the memory of her old friend Collard, she came to place herself under his protection. I had heard much talk of her; but she put to shame the most exaggerated of her biographers.

The first time that I was at Corcy she was shut up in a little quilted boudoir, in which the cushions prevented her from hearing the village bell tolling for the dead. At the end of an hour she made her appearance, with a smelling bottle at her nose and a perfume box containing chloride in her hand, to inform herself, before entering, if I was in good health; if I had long had the measles; and, lastly, if any epidemic sickness prevailed at Villers-Hellon. Satisfied with the answers which were given her, she crossed the threshold of the door; approached me, sprinkled me slightly with vinegar on all sides, and kissed me on the forehead. Having been told that I was a musician, she made me sit down to the piano, and desired me to play a *galop;* then rushing to her son forced him to dance with her.

"Mother," said Jules, breathless, and endeavouring to stop her, "you will kill me!"

"Encore, encore!" she replied, dragging him on; "it is excellent for the health."

"But, mother, I shall fall through fatigue; you put me out of breath."

"Come on! It is necessary for my digestion!"

And as Jules still stood panting and half dead, she threw herself on a sofa, and said to my grandfather:

"Collard, I am most unfortunate! You see how unnatural are my children; they refuse even to dance a *galop* to repair the health of their mother. Ah! I have good reason to complain!"

Madame de Montbreton passed her life on the high roads, quitting Paris whenever there were two sick persons in her street, and flying from Corcy, if a woman there had the fever. She merely existed for the purpose of preserving herself from death; entertained a horror against all who were ill or unhappy; and refused to see her friends when they were in mourning. She one day sent her son and daughter-in-law from her house because she had discovered some pimples on the cheek of the little Cécile, which made her afraid of catching a disease of the skin.

After pestilence, the greatest terror of Madame de Montbreton was her husband, a little, round, and inoffensive being, whom she pensioned off that they might never see each other. She loved her children well enough, but treated them like slaves, on whom she could daily inflict a thousand little domestic tortures, which they however bore with incredible indifference. She detested her daughter-in-law and Madame de Nicolaï, with whom she had absolute personal quarrels. The manias of Madame de Montbreton were innumerable. At Paris she would eat no bread except that baked at Villers-Coterets; and at Corcy, she had water sent from Paris, refusing to drink any but that of the Seine, saying that the water of the country contained a cement which built up little monuments in her stomach. One day, one of her teeth, which were very loose, nearly choked her; the next day she had all of them drawn!

The sons had not shared in the political broils of their mother. They became a little less royalist in our liberal little castle; and among all the agreeable things which they found at Villers-Hellon, they reckoned as the most solid, that of being released from their mother. MM. de Montbreton, with some gaiety and attraction, had an ignorance much more indisputable than their coat of arms; and a talent of saying, better than anybody else, the newest and most extravagant absurdities.

Eugène, the youngest, had married Mademoiselle de Nicolaï, of whom we knew very little. She had never made more than a nuptial visit to my grandfather, though he had been closely connected with the Lameth family, and M. de Nicolaï, formerly *préfet* of Laon. Eugène was what might be called a good boy, who loved his friends;

but would not sacrifice to his friendship the pleasure of stamping them with ridicule, and of having a jest at their expense.

It is said that while Jocko, the illustrious monkey, was the rage, Eugène de Montbreton learned to imitate him; and was so successful in the saloons of aristocratic *faubourg* St. Germain, that the Duchess de Berry, hearing of him, expressed a desire to witness the exhibition of his talent. M. de Montbreton had the honor of an admission to enact the monkey in the little apartments of the Tuileries; and the gracious princess recompensed him by sending him the cross of the Legion of Honour!

M. de Montbreton thought the "History of Fernando Cortez," converted into an opera, very badly INVENTED, and firmly believed that La Ferté Milon was the native country of the great Homer.

But notwithstanding all that, and perhaps on that account, Eugène was exceedingly amusing, and we liked him. We were glad of his visits, which always brought us some hours of gaiety; and as he ridiculed his friends, his friends ridiculed him, and that without scruple or rancour on either side.

For our *soirées dansantes*, my grandfather added to these every-day neighbours, the sub-préfet, his wife, some old friends, and a few of the *élite* of Soissons; and my aunt Garat, on quitting Paris, drew after her several graceful and coquetish female friends and some gentlemen, who were accounted at once amiable and fashionable.

About the period of the first snows, and of stag-hunting, we usually had a visit from General Daumesnil. He was one of the old glories of the empire, with a heart of gold, a soul of iron, and the benevolence of a child. His fine head, his look, full of energy and power, his frank expression, and the affection which he retained for the memory of my father, are religiously engraven on my mind. After the Revolution of 1830, they restored to Vincennes its brave and faithful commandant with his glorious wooden leg. At the entreaty of General Daumesnil, my mother permitted me to go and pass a few days in his fastness.

There I again met Marie, the old friend of my childhood and school-days, metamorphosed into a young woman, oc-

cupied solely about dress, having abandoned all serious employment, lest she should be fatigued with study; she had renounced even the cultivation of her fine and graceful talent for the piano, in order to preserve the delicate whiteness of her pretty hands. She still, however, possessed the affectionate heart which she had inherited from her father, but she had already begun to employ with success all the little supernatural graces of her mother. Madame Daumesnil was amiable, and had mind, blended, it may be, with a little affectation in voice, manner, look, and idea. She was eminently an incomprehensible woman. Having been pretty at fifteen, she was unable to console herself at finding she was much less so at forty. She loved her excellent husband and her children, and vainly sought, without ever meeting, the brother of her soul.

CHAPTER X.

In the spring the cholera came to spread excitement through our poor France. It did not spare Villers-Hellon. My good grandfather was admirable for his forethought and courage. He sent for a young physician from Paris, transformed his château into a dispensary, where the unfortunate sick found all that might solace them, and timid healthful persons came to seek wholesome preservatives. It was above all things difficult to dispel the fears of contagion in the peasantry, among whom fright degenerated into panic terror. In order to inspirit them, it was necessary to be calm, while looking upon the most cruel and fearful sufferings; to hear, without blenching, that the scourge had marked a new victim; that death had relieved a poor struggler.

Succour was sent among the cottagers, for the consolation of orphans, widows, and childless mothers. All this was wretched; but the self-devotion of my noble grandfather was blessed in the end with success. Some of our good peasants were preserved, a great number of our sick were cured, and all our poor dying patients received the attentions of their families, the aid of the physician, and the consolations of religion. Our good pastor, M. Dufour, conducted himself as an apostle; and multiplying himself with the danger, became the providence of three villages.

The health of my mother, extremely weak, required a change of air and of place. We departed for Alsace with the brother of M. de Coëhorn, Secretary to M. de Sebastiani, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and who fled, affected with one of those terrors which render the imagination sick, display themselves in green and yellow on the visage, and oppress the moral sense like the saddest of fixed ideas.

M. Edmond de Coëhorn, younger than his brother, had a heart suffocated with an egotism which had become chronic, with great gravity, a strange mind, and an eccentricity approaching, in some degree to insanity. On reaching Ittenwillers, he surrounded himself with all the known pre-

servatives against the cruel epidemic which he dreaded. He ate nothing but rice; laboured from morning till night at planing boards, for exercise; went from the saloon when a newspaper was brought in; was seized with cramp in the stomach if any one spoke of pain in the bowels; and truly disquieted himself at having healthy looks, profound sleep, and a formidable appetite.

"Believe me," said he, with doubtful conviction, "these appearances of health are dreadful; you may laugh, but one is never so exposed to death as in this state of quietude; allow me to complain, I have dangerously good health."

After having fatigued his limbs for a long while in his joiner's work-room, he sat himself down to music. He composed charming waltzes, and very bad romances; sang well in Italian, and executed marvellously the second part of all my *nocturnes*. He was most amiable towards me, more amiable than he had ever been known to be. Perhaps I should have been flattered with these first devotions; but Eugène having told me one day, laughing, that I was his *pill against ennui*, my young-womanish self-love revolted against the anti-choleric virtues which had gained all these attentions.

Ittenwillers was exceedingly animated during all that summer. A sister of M. de Coëhorn, married in Russia, having come to pass some time in France, every one was anxious to celebrate her return, and to gather around her once more all the joys of the past in the land of her birth.

Madame de Dunten had been buried for six years in Livonia, in a perfectly lone château, seeing her husband and the snow for nine months, and her husband and a few leaves during the rest of the year; with an excellent fortune—that is in plains, forests, and serfs, but without a penny of money. She was a charming woman, full of mind and heart, but had grown somewhat savage, though hers was a kind and eccentric barbarity.

Madame de Dunten had estates several leagues in extent. Her château was immense, and contained a hundred domestics, among whom were tailors, shoemakers, and hatters, in fact, slaves of all those professions which are indispensable to the wants of life, as also of those which minister merely to the requisitions of luxury. Nothing had to be purchased;

food, and the materials necessary for clothing, were obtained from their lands and flocks, and all that these could not supply, was procured at Riga by the exchange of their produce; Madame de Dunten, consequently, was unable to habituate herself to her resurrection in our narrow little life of civilization, which, she said, stifled her.

Among the friends whom we oftenest received, were several young ladies and gentlemen: Mesdemoiselles de T——, my old friends, now became so beautiful and so scornful, that I found in them much more to admire than to love; their cousins, three very tedious nullities; MM. de Buissière, who had mind, information, and gaiety; and lastly, M. de Menneval, son of the private secretary of Napoleon, who had a fine little face, a pretty little figure, a pretty little foot, a pretty little soul, and an immense love for Mathilde de Coëhorn. Mathilde, a charming young woman, resembled one of the beautiful German Madonnas, in softness and suavity of expression; and if she was a little more animated than a statue; she sometimes forgot to live through *nonchalance* and *ennui*. She was an excellent musician, and a good and tender creature; not that she had so good a heart for loving those who loved her, but so well reflecting their affections, that she might have been mistaken to do so. Her soul was like the beautiful Venetian mirrors, which faithfully reflect the features, expression, and smiles of those we love, while present; but the smooth surface of which is incapable of restoring in absence those we have lost.

Sophie, the youngest sister of M. de Coëhorn, had an excellent heart, and much originality. She would have had much good sense, but for her constant abstraction, and a profound pique against an unfortunate Roman nose which engrossed all her face; and the magnificent proportions of which had only the immense defect of being unnaturally large.

I lived somewhat uncivilized in the midst of all that world; preserving all my tastes and habits of overgrown childhood—the natural consequence of my education. My mother had often repeated to me that I was ugly, the truth of which I readily perceived, on comparing in the glass my own head with the pretty, curly head of Antonine; I there-

fore vowed to acquire sufficient sense to cause my failings to be overlooked, and amiability enough to render me pretty. All my days were devoted to study. During the hours of repast, and those of the evening reunions, I made myself imperceptible; and at ten, a look from my mother sent me to bed. I was so habituated not to occupy others with my insignificant self, that it appeared to me most surprising when a stranger deemed himself bound to say an obliging word to me. One day M. Edmond de Coëhorn having kissed my hand, I was so astonished, so vain, and so pleased, that I thanked him.

During all that summer I had the gratification of reading several of the romances of Sir Walter Scott: that reading enchanted me. I was no longer alone: my imagination had friends in Fergus, the Master of Ravenswood, Flora Mac Ivor, and Diana Vernon—that frank and noble girl whom I had made the companion of my dreams and the sister of my thoughts. Every night before sleeping, I called her near me, or went in search of her, galloping beside her when, on her white mare, she hunted over the heaths of Scotland. She told me her joys and her tastes, which were mine also; she spoke of her heart, and I felt, that if ever I loved, I should love as she did.

That intimacy between my idea and that conceived by the genius of Walter Scott, lasted a long time. It even exercised great influence over my life several years later; and still, to this moment, I evoke as a sweet remembrance, and a phantom friend, the noblest image created by the Scottish poet.

The German lessons which M. de Coëhorn gave me, suffered a little from the animated life which had invaded our solitude; but I studied much alone, and went to seek counsel and encouragement from one of his aunts, whose little mansion was only separated from Ittenwillers by a lawn.

All the new family of my mother were kind and affectionate towards us. Madame de Fontanille, who had understood that we required, above all things, to be loved, had opened her heart to us with parental solicitude. She called us her dear children, and we called her our dear aunt, like her nieces. It would have been impossible to be more in-

dulgent—to forget oneself more entirely for others than she did. When I had obtained permission to pass my morning with her, I was well pleased. Her eyes not permitting her to read, I placed mine at her service, and to recompense me, she related to me her charming and simple translations of Schiller and Goethe, when her verses were so original, so perfect, that they seemed transported rather than translated.

Madame de Fontanille had no children, but a husband as good as she was kind, the winning of whom was a little romance. M. de Fontanille had quitted Gascony, to lead, at Paris the joyous life of a bachelor. Loving all the pretty things of this world, he kept his adoration for pretty little feet; so he busied himself in making a collection of all the darling slippers which had merited his enthusiasm, and he wore always over his heart the gay satin shoe of his most recent love. Business called him to Strasbourg. There he encountered, in a drawing-room, set up on the gilt sphynx of an enormous gothic andiron—a living foot, smart, charming—of admirable purity of form, and not longer or thicker than a biscuit *à la cuillère*. Astonished, and ravished at the same time, M. de Fontanille procured an introduction to the mother of the damsel with that delicious little foot. He saw it every day, and became impassioned with it, till, discovering that a provincial shoemaker, called in to make a new shrine for his idol, was waiting below for orders, he took fright lest the craftsman should bruise, wound, or, most dreadful of all, dishonour it by giving it a corn! His disquietude was fearful, insupportable—and, in order to save that little *chef-d'œuvre*, of which he wished to become lord and master, while making it his god, he offered up to it his name, his heart, and his hand! He was accepted; and after his marriage, M. de Fontanille went nearly every year to Paris, in order to have made, under his own inspection, new shoes for his wife.

CHAPTER XI.

When autumn came, with the vintage and the cool days, rather gilded than heated by the rays of the sun, we made long and delightful excursions to the mountains. The Baron Hallez, who possessed several of the richest hills of the Vosges, with their forests, their pastures, and the antique ruins of their feudal castles, afforded us several clambering mornings, which were enchanting. We got over the first part of the road on little mountain horses; then, when we reached the steep rocks, where the path was practicable only for herdsmen and goats, we confided our safety to our own limbs, and each, with more or less of address and agility, surmounted the ascent. There were falls, reddened faces, and panting hearts; rocks scaled with dexterity, and mountain streams crossed with skill. Every false step was hissed; every bold and graceful leap applauded; till about noon we reached some old turret, in which we found, *by chance*, shade, couches of moss, and an excellent dinner.

Most frequently, some wind instruments, distributed in the underwood around, formed delicious echoes; the musicians executing their national and attractive *lænder*. At first all listened, then danced with the gaiety and spirit of mountaineers; halting only under excessive fatigue, or when the clouds, empurpled by the setting sun, warned us to depart; and then there remained to us scarcely sufficient strength to enable us to glide over the dried needles of the pines, to the path where our horses awaited us.

These rides enchanted me. I was unable, from pleasure and impatience, to sleep during the nights which preceded them. The two sons of M. Hallez were ordinarily my chevaliers. They were seventeen or eighteen years old; and were sensible and agreeable. They were, like me, in a category by no means marriageable; and we could enjoy, therefore, without fear of compromising ourselves, the most rapid rides, the most imprudent attempts, and the most silly laughter. As they danced very badly, however, I aban-

doned them at the ball for my father-in-law, or M. Edmond de Coëhorn, both excellent dancers, who made me whirl with the utmost rapidity, and lifted me like a feather.

The Alsatian dances are a composition of the waltz and galopade. The rhythm, at first very slow, becomes more and more rapid. You *balancez*, turn carelessly with your partner, then the arms entwine and form a thousand graceful passes; you retire, advance, keeping time by striking the soles of your feet; you appear to fly by the velocity with which you turn, then, when the last *accord* is heard, the gentleman lifts his partner from the ground, with a somewhat savage cry, and deposing her on the earth again, bows gracefully his thanks and an adieu.

In the month of December, M. Edmond de Coëhorn, appointed secretary to the embassy at Constantinople, took his departure, loaded with commissions, and our tender wishes for Madame de Martens, who was already gone to rejoin M. de Martens for six months in the east—he having been named ambassador from the King of Prussia to the Sublime Porte. The health of my poor aunt had cruelly suffered from that journey. We knew her to be sad and ill, and were often very painfully depressed concerning her. M. de Coëhorn, therefore, promised to be attentive and kind to her for our sakes.

We passed all that winter at Strasbourg. I was introduced to several persons, and made my entrée into the world; that is, I had the honour of seeing my name written on the cards of invitation, of going to a few balls, of receiving a few salutations in the street, and having a few general words addressed to me in a drawing-room. I always loved dancing, doubtless, because it was motion; and, perhaps, also because I danced well; because I heard it repeated around me; and because our self-love plays always a small part in our tastes. To make amends for that, the prattle of the ball-room was odious to me. I had no stock of ready-made phrases; and my mother had forbidden to me so large a number of subjects of conversation, that it was scarcely possible for me to appear othe rwisethan a fool. The rain and fine weather made up my vocabulary; and these exhausted, I had to remain mute like the most stupid. Sometimes, wearied with my nothingness, and with all those

shackles imposed by propriety, I threw off the yoke for a second, and dared to tell my partner that I was, somewhat by inclination, and more by order, a dancing machine; praying him to be indulgent, and to remit for a few years, the shock of our imaginations and thoughts. Most frequently, however, I resigned myself to my part without giving warning; and endeavoured merely to put in my toes the small grain of spirit which I might not have in my mouth. If I should add to these ball-room vexations the sermons of the next day, on the text of a somewhat whimsical bearing, a too sleepy air, or too animate a look, it may be understood, that I accepted with regret my dignity of young woman, and why it was that I remained so long a time somewhat untamed and childish.

The society of Strasbourg had been flourishing in past days, but the Revolution of July had brought about a necessity for the fusion of classes, which had paralyzed gaiety and good feeling. The proud nobility, pretty generally ruined, readily accepted the invitations of rich commoners, but carried to their balls an air of vain condescension, as vulgar as it was transparent. On their side, the wealthy citizen *parvenus*, in going to the houses of their adversaries, smiled at the tarnished liveries and faded blazonments of the noble pretenders; and, in their desire to oppose the pride of purse to that of ancestry, seemed to think that they had coined sense, education, and good-breeding.

In a few houses, nevertheless, the frank and cheerful cordiality of ancient days remained, and luxuries of the heart took the place of those of wealth and vanity. In their balls, the national waltz triumphed over the quadrille; *galops*, *cotillons*, and *boulangères* succeeded each other till day; when at the moment of retiring from so much pleasure and fatigue, potato-salads, and *pâtés de foie gras* were served up to refresh both dancers and danseuses.

Among the authorities, General Brayer alone occupied himself with the pleasures of those with whom he lived. He gave excellent balls, and his daughter, Madame Marchand, did the honours with perfect grace. M. Marchand, the first valet-de-chambre of Napoleon, was well informed, but sad and reserved; and bore in his looks the expression of a great recollection and a great regret.

At the beginning of Spring, our poor little sister fell sick; that was a fearful grief to my mother, and a profound sadness to me. I had never loved Jeanne as I loved Antonine; but my affection, which was directed towards the child rather than the sister, was still great and almost maternal. How often have I rocked her on my knees—how often dragged her little carriage through the alleys of the park—racing more rapidly because she cried with her little merry voice, "Again, Marie! again, again!" because I saw her pale forehead redden and become animate, and because if I fell near her, out of breath, she threw her two little arms around my neck, embraced me, and covered me with flowers from her favourite bouquets.

No actual disease was exhibited, yet every day stole from the poor little creature some of her strength and fresh colour. Every day she grew more beautiful, more adorable. It seemed that the child was being transformed into an angel; and her poor mother might have understood, from the perfection of her treasure, that it was about to return to heaven. What despair! To feel herself powerless to preserve the life she had given; to see her child grow pale, suffer and die on her bosom! And that agony of adieus, without a possibility of illusion, lasted for six months; when Jeanne expired without pain, like those beautiful stars which sparkle at night in the firmament, grow pale with the dawn, and disappear in the morning.

When the little cradle remained void of our angel, my mother was stricken with a grief that was almost beyond reason. Sometimes our caresses made her sick, and she would repulse us with violence; and at others, seeing us weep with her, she kissed our tears, and seemed to draw from them consolation for herself. The more distant became the remembrance of that dear child, the more she was attracted towards the living. Jeanne had loved to sleep with her little hands in one of my ringlets—my mother made me cut off that ringlet and give it to her. Jeanne loved Antonine above everybody, and Antonine became more than ever the favourite of the bereaved mother.

They had buried the little coffin of the child under a white rose-tree, not far from the house. My mother and M. de Coëhorn were there incessantly. Their griefs thus

fed, grew daily more violent. It was necessary to drag them from Ittenwillers to Villers-Hellon, where my aunt Garat came to rejoin us; and we were presently all reunited by the arrival of my aunt de Martens, who had been driven from Constantinople by the *mal du pays*.

The occupation attendant upon that return, which gave back to my mother her sister and most intimate friend, made her well. She introduced to her M. de Coëhorn, and told her all the pleasures and sufferings which had succeeded each other in her heart, since the day of their separation. Her regret, in ceasing to be the sole chord that remained to vibrate in her bosom, became a calm sadness. Her health no longer gave us any fear; but, on the contrary, we had hopes to see speedily on her knees, another little Jeanne!

My aunt de Martens had been away for seven years from France, from her father, her family, and friends. The day of her return, therefore, was a grand day of embracing and weeping for joy—of looks compounded of smiles and tears. Seeking for the children whom she had loved, she found them become full grown young women—was all astonishment and felicitation; questions and kisses were exchanged in abundance; and I again repeat, that was a grand day.

I had always entertained great love for my aunt, and a firm belief in her good sense; and now that I was able to put my faith to the proof by reality and reason, it became every day stronger and more perfect. Madame de Martens is not only an amiable and intellectual woman, but is still more potent for a boundless charm and attraction. Her thoughts, in order to please, assume all forms, and display every degree of grace and liveliness. Amid the world, her profoundness is veiled; but often a word reveals it, and the unsuspected echoes escape. Hers is a mind resplendent as the most beautiful opal; imagination sparkles there, and the heart has there its rays.

CHAPTER XII.

My two cousins were welcomed, and beloved among us. They were both pretty, had both brought from Germany, Italy, and the East, a little strange perfume, which rendered them deliciously eccentric. Hermine, fair and pale, was the very type of the ladye of a poet's dreams. Bertha had two great eyes, a turned up and mutinous nose, the heart of an angel, and the wit of a demon.

The model-education of my cousins was the dearest thought and care of their mother. After her system, they learned their thoughts as we learned our lessons. They had, officially, every taste, idea, and belief of their mother; a perfect demeanour, reviewed and corrected daily; talents, replete with profound knowledge; and, lastly, a governess *whom they governed*, and who was a kind of responsible minister, tedious to herself, and still more so to those over whom she had nominal authority, being by turns the scolder and the scolded.

My grandfather was happy in that complete reunion of all his family. His three daughters, still young, still beautiful, and always kind and good, did with as much benevolence as grace the honours of his house. His son reigned over his fields, his woods, and even his shepherdesses. His granddaughters awakened around him a thousand echoes of pleasure and gaiety, and all those young heads which he cherished, and which adored him, seemed the benediction of his beneficent life, the crown which heaven had placed on his white hairs.

Study separated during the day the small from the larger children; but the evening, which brought us together again, was passed in dancing and sports of all kinds. We disputed with each other the piano, the arm chairs of my grandfather, and the private conversations of my aunt De Martens, who, always extended on the sofa, devoted to us quarters of hours of intelligence, caresses, and sometimes sermons.

My aunts left for Paris at the fall of the first snows, and it required several weeks to habituate me again to live alone

without regret and ennui. Fortunately my mother had promised her sisters to pass a few days at Paris in the middle of winter:—that to me was a source of consolation and hope, and afterwards a charming reality.

During that sojourn in Paris my two aunts shared the care of amusing me; and my first pleasure was a little ball at the Tuileries, where I royally fatigued myself. I knew nobody. The friends of my aunt De Martens were grave men, politicians, diplomatists, *anti-dancers* by nature and position; so after admiring all the luxurious fairies who surrounded me; the handsome dresses and pretty faces; after having endured the vexation of finding myself riveted to my chair, through scarcity of dancers, while my feelings were excited by the quadrilles of Tolbecque, I went to bed, fatigued, dissatisfied, and well-pleased to repose myself at last from the pleasures of others.

That evening left on my mind a superb contempt for the world. Philosophy, grafted on wounded vanity, being of the most obstinate kind, it was necessary to drag me as a victim to a charming ball given by the lady of Marshal Suchet.

The kind words of that gracious lady, who told me that she well knew and highly appreciated my father, were my first joy; then the beautiful eyes of my aunt Garat, who was my protector, drew dancers around me. I met M. Ernest de Ganay, whom I had often seen at Villers-Hellon, who talked with good sense, was somewhat mischievous and very amiable; and altogether I was quite as much gratified there as I had been dissatisfied at the Tuileries; and on my return, I already found myself renouncing, with less austerity and good faith, Satan, his pomps, and his works. During that evening M. de Ganay, who had constituted himself my *cicerone*, pointed out to me several of the most fashionable women. I admired the beautiful Duchess d'Istrie, and still more the Duchess de Plaisance, pretty, buoyant, and transparent as one of those delicate *demoiselles*, cousins to the butterflies which dance in the spring on the crystal surface of the brooks.

My aunts sometimes took me to the Opera. I saw *Robert le Diable*, in which Nourrit, Madame Damoreau, and Madame Dorus were the skilful interpreters of that great

thought of Meyerbeer. I was enthusiastic! It seemed to me that the songs were worthy of heaven; perhaps not of ours, but of that of Mahomet, where the chosen of the prophet intoxicate themselves with hydromel and harmony, and are scorched with the black eyes of their divine houris.

CHAPTER XIII.

In the month of March my mother was dangerously ill. M. de Coëhorn had gone to Alsace to superintend some business, and the care of our poor invalid rested with me. I passed my days at her pillow; my nights at her feet on some cushions. I alone had *the right* of giving her drink, of raising her head, of warming her poor feet in some medicated water. I alone received her thanks and her smiles, and had her ardent kisses. I surprised her eyes following me with tenderness, till at length she came to love me as much as I had dreamed she might, and I *adored* her.

Six weeks passed thus; but then M. de Coëhorn returning, it became necessary to relinquish his rights to him, and to fall again upon the chilly and stern affection of the past.

My heart, which had expanded to tender effusions, was then once more sadly deceived, and sank back upon itself. All its independence, all its strange thoughts reawakened, and my imagination, which had already created to itself a life of participated affection, descended with pain to the sordid realities of existence. I had then no experience of things or of men. I believed that the principle of my actions was noble; but I was unreflecting, imprudent, wishing to act as I dreamed, never following the track beaten by opinion, and preferring a precipice to a wheel-rut. Not occupying myself with indifferent persons, without wishing to do so I deranged their combinations, and often my own were upset by the contact. In short, I marched into life with my head raised too high to take care of my feet, observing the smallest cloud in the heaven of my thoughts, not perceiving the rocks and dangers that beset the path of reality, and obedient solely to my first impulse! My mind is lofty, self-willed, and obstinate; and ever the slave of its only counseller, my heart.

Elizabeth came into the world with the first flowers and the first fine days of spring, and bore a slight resemblance to our poor little Jeanne, whom she succeeded in our affections; but she had more strength, and less of her delicate and sylph-like beauty. Too weak herself to attempt suckling her, my mother hired for her a handsome nurse, with glossy black ringlets, superb eyes, a questionable character, the most exaggerated pretensions, and a rooted conviction of her own infallibility. My mother not only became herself this woman's slave, but insisted on the most implicit obedience on our part to the will and pleasure of her favourite, who lost her milk, and half starved herself with hunger when she fancied herself slighted.

Never was Villers-Hellon so gay as this summer: there was a continual round of hunting excursions, balls, and delightful family parties. Our bevy of young ladies was augmented by Mlle. de M——, a very agreeable young person, strictly brought up by her mother, and adored by her family, but whom we could not help upbraiding for a superfluity of accomplishment and good-breeding, which did not add to the pleasure of our meetings, as young girls of seventeen.

Madame de M—— was a leader of ton of the Fauxbourg St. Germain, of lively and elegantly aristocratic manners. She was reputed malicious; I, for my part, always found her good-natured and amiable, with nothing more sarcastic about her than her little snub nose, slightly indicative of a shrewdish turn.

There were besides, at Long-Pont, the Countess de M——, a benevolent dowager; and General Count de M——, a merry and kind-hearted old friend of my mother, an admirer of the sex in general, and of my aunt de Martens in particular; whom, perhaps, he might have formerly married, but from the uncertainty of his position and his limited fortune. He was at *that* time sub-lieutenant, and his income *one* thousand livres per annum.

Villers-Cotterets was the head-quarters of the hunters, their horses, dogs, and followers. Among the sportsmen were the Duke of Valençay, the nephew, and a joint heir of Prince Talleyrand, a share of whose wit he had already inherited; M. de Vaublanc, and MM. de L——.

I applied to Jules de Montbreton for information respecting the latter. "It is a charming family," he replied: "there is Blanch, who draws with exquisite taste; Henry, the oldest son, is the picture of health; Jules, the second, frolicksome as a kitten; then Arthur, the gentle squire of his lady cousins; and lastly, Pulcherie, gifted with an extraordinary memory. M. L. de L——, their uncle and father, is a gentleman of the old school, who will display to you all the gallant attention and polite graces of the beaux of Versailles and the Trianon. I promise you as a partner in the first quadrille this accomplished Vestris, and for the second his son, who is as haughty as you are sometimes; and is, moreover, gifted with all your own horror of compliment and ceremony. So make yourself killing, throw back your shoulders, and, above all, endeavour to make your nose as white as possible."

I had the honour of dancing with M. L. de L——; and, if his manners were somewhat antiquated, his perfect amiability; his desire to please; and his respectful attention even to a young girl, bespoke the true gentleman, and quite won my heart.

As for M. Arthur de L——, he seemed to revere and love his father above all. His careless reserve and rather haughty manners had their origin in simplicity of mind; and there was something so gentle in his hearty voice, and in his open eye, so timidly bashful in the drawing-room, and so animated in the ardour of the chase, that I made him my hero; and for two months his image often crossed my thoughts, and cost me a blush.

Madame Henry de L——, granddaughter of Madame de V——, came to spend the hunting season at Villers-Hellon. She was pretty, and simple as a blue-bell of the fields, but sacrificing to her fanaticism for truth the nothings of polite society. She was the terror of all the affected and over-pretending of her acquaintance, who pronounced her vulgar, capricious, and half-cracked; while in truth she was accomplished, agreeable, and witty; and with two or three faults, would have been perfect.

Before returning to Alsace, let me speak of Madame de Montbreton, with whom we had formed the most intimate acquaintance; and whom I admired with perhaps an excess

of enthusiasm. She was handsome, and her large black eyes seemed to transfix you as she spoke; while, with her intelligent play of features, she had the gift of soothing by her kindness, or making you smart under the effects of her vexation, according to the caprice of the moment.

Madame Montbreton was very agreeable in conversation; her learning was far less formidable than her pretensions implied; her contempt for her husband supreme; her lively manners, tinged with hauteur in society, and perhaps too familiar and ardent in a *tête-à-tête*. The world judged her with asperity; I loved her for her kindness to me in my inexperience, and for taking notice of one whom no one else had deigned to observe. I acknowledged her superiority without analyzing it; and proud and happy in her professed friendship, my self-love opened to her my heart.

I very frequently spent whole days with her; and although there never was an intimate exchange of thoughts between us, which would have been impossible, I listened attentively to her discourse, almost as if to an oracle. I replied frankly to her questions; and she seemed struck by the strangeness of some of my notions, which she attempted to combat. In such cases, however, I was always dumb; having been unaccustomed to reason, except on matters almost indifferent to me. Habituated to preserve in the secrets of my thoughts all those ideas not in strict accordance with the received and tolerated uses of society, they had become in some sort my idols; had I begun by defending them, I should have ended by wishing to impose them. To avoid becoming dictatorial, I remained silent, well knowing that a young lady should be attentive to others, without pretending to attention from them; and that she should use the sense which Nature has given her, in listening graciously to others, and in holding her tongue with proper spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

My sorrow was extreme at parting with all my friends and the delights of Villers-Hellon, to return to Alsace, where we had scarcely an acquaintance. Elizabeth was lovely, and blooming with health; my mother and M. de Coëhorn adored her; yet in the little treasure so ardently desired, they neither seemed, nor were, perfectly happy. In what, then, had their existence changed? In all—and in nothing! We lived as retired and solitary as heretofore; excepting that my mother, who suffered from ill-health, went out even more rarely, and that M. de Coëhorn was much less with her. At night, when the moon was in Heaven, and silence on the earth, they no longer leaned together against the half-opened window; they no longer heard each other although speechless; were no longer animated but by one mind and impulse. Plans were discussed, opinions combated. My mother had lost the bright halo of love that had formerly glittered on her brow; M. de Coëhorn that happy satisfaction which had so gracefully adorned his noble features: she was less young, he seemed to grow younger. Alas! and do the affections of the heart wither like the flowers of the fields? Love, does he yield up his dreams, his hopes, his joys, to the winds of custom, which scatter them afar, as the last leaves of autumn are dispersed by the chill autumn blast? Oh, God! it must be indeed a grief immense, to witness thus the agonies of one's dearest affections!

My poor mother, on losing her happiness, became stricter with me, and more indulgent to Antonine. M. de Coëhorn was often ill-tempered, and created troubles to obtain the amusement of being angry. I accepted, very unwillingly, the part of victim; and, preserving my position of equality and fraternal impunity, I bravely struggled with

M. de Coëhorn: if he was unjust, I became impertinent; if he scolded, I ridiculed his anger, and sometimes made him laugh at it in spite of himself. When I saw our fireside the scene of mute repining or angry debate, I seated myself at the piano, or compelled my step-father to walk with me, or even ventured to propound one of my out-of-the-way notions, which would draw my mother from her sombre reflections to scold me or to read me a lecture.

I had now become a tolerable musician; was said to have a good voice, but to sing very badly. In fact, I used to run through, with the facility of a bird, the scale or the most difficult of cadences; but as to singing with expression tender or impassioned airs, that was impossible. I dared not give utterance by my voice to the impressions of my heart, neither could I adopt those which pass current in society; and I sang so badly the romances which my mother sang so sweetly, that I used to make her laugh as much as she made me weep.

I was now growing into womanhood, and yet was treated more than ever as a child; the little fantastic tricks and follies by which I expended the life which boiled within me were encouraged and fostered. On horseback, I sought, created, and braved a thousand dangers; on foot, I could never resist the pleasure of leaping a hedge or ditch, or both, with no other object but that of protesting against a barrier or an obstacle in my path; and while such hoyden feats were tolerated or pardoned, the least independence in my opinions encountered angry opposition, and they unceasingly wounded my self-love, in order to repress or extinguish it. But all was useless. If I consented to be esteemed ugly, my pride revolted against the idea of being thought a simpleton; I held my tongue, since that was exacted; but I wrote and read with ardour, accustomed my mind to poetize the minutest actions of my life, and preserved it with infinite solicitude from contact with anything vulgar or trivial. To this I united the error of so clothing reality as to render it less unamiable to my imagination; and the still more grievous one of preferring the beautiful to the good, of fulfilling the excess of duty more easily than duty itself, and of preferring in everything the impossible to the possible.

My mother determined to spend the winter at Strasbourg; she constantly complained of ill-health, and thought herself far worse than did her doctors, who attributed her sufferings more to nervousness than to disease. The fashionable winter set in auspiciously; three or four evenings a-week were devoted to entertainments, and the advance of the season was expected to be gayer still. Society in Strasbourg had made several valuable acquisitions. There were the Marchioness of Caraman, so graceful and talented that she might have been suspected of a fairy godmother; M. de la F——, who had a fine head, then a—a very fine head—lastly, a superbly fine head; finally, M. Theodore de Bussière, who had recently married a gentle and lovely person, the daughter of M. Humann.

One day, early in January, I was taken seriously ill. I had made up my mind to considerable suffering rather than miss a ball, on which I had calculated for some time with pleasure. After several hours' dancing, an icy wind breathed at my departure on my burning brow, and the consequence was, a violent and alarming attack of the measles the next day.

Dread of infection drove all whom I loved from my couch; I was banished with my nurse to my bed-room, where I suffered in solitude, listening for the sound of a voice, the rustling of a gown, the measured tread of my mother, or Antonine's lighter step, in terror of dying without seeing them again, and bereft of all consolation save the forlorn hope of sharing my father's grave, and of joining his soul in Paradise.

Three weeks passed away in this manner; I was out of danger; but still very weak, when I learned, from an imprudent word exchanged between my physician and my attendant, that my mother also was stretched on a sick bed. I would have risen and flown to her chamber, to lavish on her my cares; but that was impossible, my disease was contagious. I would have given her my life, but my presence would only have added to the danger that threatened her. Oh! the anguish, the anxiety of the succeeding days! I interrogated with equal anxiety noise and silence; day and night I sat by the cruel door that separated me from her, insensible to the deceptive words of hope with which M.

de Coëhorn and Antonine in vain sought to comfort me; there were tears in their voices as in my presentiments; I felt the whole truth; my tortures became insupportable, and, fearful for my reason, they at last conducted me to her couch.

Alas, my poor mother! all colour had fled from her features; her lips were blue, and her head reclined upon its pillow. She was no longer in pain, nor felt the burning kisses we imprinted on her wasted hands; her fixed look was turned on M. de Coëhorn, and she seemed to be counting his tears, and to gather them for a treasure in eternity. For one instant she thought of her children, and beckoning Antonine, embraced her several minutes; then turning to me, she passed her fingers slowly through my hair, parted it from off my forehead, gazed with an angelic look at my profound sorrow, and said to me: "Poor Marie! I loved you!" I covered her with kisses of happiness and anguish; but my breaking heart was bursting with sighs; they were obliged to tear me from her arms, and I went to hide myself behind the curtains. With her head supported on Eugène's breast, she spoke to him with her eyes, with her soul, seeming to derive a strength from her despair; our sorrow gave her pain, while her own prevented her from suffering....Several hours passed in this agony.

About daybreak, a piercing cry from Eugène announced to us that she had left us.

After a day of frightful anxiety, which almost unseated our reason, I found it impossible to divest myself of a fixed idea that took possession of my mind, and pursued me constantly. I was determined to take a last look of my dead mother. Gently placing on her bed Antonine, who had gone to sleep in my arms, I slipped unperceived into the chamber of death. Oh, God! how strikingly we feel thy power in death! At the sight of my mother, whose features already wore the holy beauty of immortality, my tears ceased to flow, and I knelt at her feet as before a saint. I had come to pray over her and for her; but when I saw her, I prayed to her for ourselves.

"Forgive me, sainted mother!" I ejaculated, "for not adoring you sufficiently in your life. Look into my heart, and behold how it has suffered; pardon, beloved mother, guardian angel, pardon ———"

I would have severed a lock of hair, but dared not; she seemed to me sacred and inviolable as the consecrated host. I imprinted a last kiss on her forehead, and after freezing my lips, that kiss seemed to chill my life, and I was obliged to be carried from the room.

The calmness I had recovered in praying to my mother, deserted me directly I was alone. My abandonment and isolation in the world did not yet occur to my thoughts; she, she alone occupied and tortured them. Alas, alas! while she had been with me, I had murmured against her severity, and had in mind disputed her instructions and advice. I had preserved more affection for the memory of my father than for her; her happiness had made me wretched; the late remorse of love overwhelmed me with its terrors. Could we, during the lifetime of those we love, picture to ourselves the grief we shall feel at their death, how much more zealous should we be for their happiness, how much more prize every fleeting hour of their sojourn among us!

M. de Coëhorn's despair was dreadful; without shedding a tear, his grief found vent in loud cries of anguish; he tore his hair, dashed his head against the walls, kissed on his knees the chairs on which she had sat, her books, her piano, the carpet she had trodden under her feet; he embraced Elizabeth with adoration, and, pressing us by turns in his arms, exclaimed in heart-broken accents, "My poor children, and you also I shall lose!" Tears choked his utterance; and we answered him, also sobbing, that we loved him, would love him always; that the heart of our mother had left him to our hearts.

When we were a little calmer, Eugène addressed me; and, taking my hands in his, conjured me to assist him in fulfilling the last will of her whom we wept. My mother had expressed her wish of reposing in the same grave with her infant Jane; on the spot were Eugène would reside, and which was sacred to the memory of their happiness. This communication overwhelmed me; I had hoped that death would unite on earth as in heaven my heart's treasures, and that kneeling at my mother's, I should be praying at my father's grave. This new grief struck me dumb.

"Marie, Marie!" said Eugène, "will you not obey your dying parent's last wish? It is necesssry to obtain the au-

thorization of the bishop; it must be demanded in my name and in yours. You see my heart is broken. I have nothing left me but a tomb: can you envy me that? It will be a new tie between us; you will come again to me to weep at her tomb: I ask it of you on my knees, for her sake and for mine!"

"My dear Eugène, hear me, I entreat you. The deepest and most hopeless grief will yield to time; a few short steps alone will separate the living from the dead; and if at some future ———"

"Cease, dear Marie, cease! your words overwhelm me. Why not live beside a tomb, when one has placed all his hopes, all his love, in heaven? In mercy I implore ——"

"Eugène, let her will be done."

Accordingly my mother's remains were entombed with those of her infant Jeanne. Rose-trees bloom over their grave, and two crosses of unequal size, overtopping their branches, image the blessed hope of immortality rising superior to the pain and grief of parting.

All M. de Coëhorn's family behaved with unexampled kindness to the orphans. Madame de Coëhorn took us home with her for two months; and sad and wearisome appeared the long wintry days that brought round the approach of Spring, for us to return to our family. I lived only in the letters that deplored with me my poor mother's loss: those of my aunts announced to us the same reception as if we had been their children; which they declared we already were in their hearts. Their affectionate language, intended to console our grief, rendered mine still more poignant; my gratitude was boundless, it stifled me; I would have preferred to live all my life alone, and to sink under its burden, to the obligation of making it thus weigh on others. My grandfather's tender love was my only consolation: he would love me for myself, and not as a duty; I should become the staff of his old age, and the living reminiscence of his poor Caroline; he would sustain my life, and I should enliven his. The heart is proud, and wishes to return all, even before receiving anything. I knew the extreme kindness of my aunt Garat; I anticipated at her hands, nothing short of maternal care and solicitude. How should I return them? A mother's love is repaid by one's

kisses, by one's talents, by one's successes; a good action is her sweetest reward; a noble sentiment will light her brow with pride, the world honours her, and God blesses her in her child's good qualities. But what could I do for my aunt? I could only love her, and to love her was so easy.

I was consoled in my deepest distress by Madame de Valence, the noble friend of my grandmother, who had been my dead parent's godmother, and loved me dearly from my infancy; she came to weep with me, and to suffer me to love her as much as I had learned to respect her. I regarded her as one of those guardian angels who protect the grandmother, mother, children, and grandchildren, who smile on the joys of a whole generation; and if they have no power to prevent tears, have at least the privilege of wiping them away. Madame de Valence invited me to spend a few of the winter months with her, and I accepted the invitation with gratitude. My aunt De Martens took charge of Antonine; and to finish her education, which had been rather neglected, it was determined that she should be placed for some time in a convent. St. Denis was proposed; but such was the horror of my recollections of that dreary pile, that I opposed the scheme strenuously. They made it a question of money, but I offered to augment her little income with part of mine, to enable them to send her to a respectable boarding-school in Paris, where there are not six hundred hearts and minds to form and to improve. I believed that they could not possibly refuse my proposition, which was the accomplishment of a right and of a duty; for being the elder, my sister's happiness was in some sort my natural care. Madame Adelaide settled the question by taking upon herself the care of Antonine's establishment, and my heart remembers, and will ever preserve the remembrance of her kindness: it is sweet to be protected by those we love; and the gratitude that blesses the protection extended to a sister, is very holy, and very easy to bear.

CHAPTER XV.

The summer immediately following my poor mother's death, I passed at Villers-Hellon; all who surrounded me there, mourned for her in their thoughts; my grandfather loved me with all the affection he had borne my parent; my aunts were most kind, my cousins sisterly; and my grief became calmer, without being less profound. My aunt Garat took particular charge of me; I gave her an account of each day's employment; and she blamed whatever displeased her in my character or manners, ordering and prohibiting with maternal authority.

My excellent aunt, married at seventeen, was still a girl when she became a mother, and added to all the joys society had lavished at her feet, that sweet joy which comes from heaven. The child instead of being pretty and blooming, as my aunt had dreamed, and as she became later, was at first sickly and pettish, and bitter medicines and long lectures were requisite to improve her health and disposition. My aunt, who long governed her daughter, according to her system of absolute government, was somewhat more lenient to me; she was often full of affection and tender indulgence; but when her conscience reminded her that she had adopted me as her daughter, and had duties to fulfil towards me, she became severe indeed in her advice, gave to my thoughts humiliating interpretations which wounded my feelings and my pride; then, when she surprised me in tears, she dried them with her kisses, and made me forget the unkindness I had suffered. On the whole, and I repeat it again, my aunt was most kind; even when my heart bled at the sharpness of her maternal admonitions, I could not help doing justice to the sentiment by which they were in-

spired. My affection and gratitude never failed me; but to shield my poor thoughts from censure, I stifled their voice, and learned to submit the most trifling actions and sentiments of my life to her will and opinion. I was in want of a friend, but in vain I sought one around me. Among my equals, my cousin Garat, whose imagination was the more ardent as it was the more repressed, had a good heart, but a less praiseworthy character; she was naturally candid, but compelled to dissimulate; was too exacting, and too variable in her friendship. Hermine de Martens had no affection for me; and Bertha was still only an interesting child. As for my sister, I loved her with mingled feelings of solicitude and affection, belonging rather to a mother than a friend. She had an excellent heart, and invariable sweetness of temper; and there was in her character an utter forgetfulness of self, which, while it contributed to her present, assured her future happiness; and I, who was fully sensible how unhappy I was in my thoughts, now so mournful, and now so bright, that they deprived reality of all pleasure; I who suffered so often at bending those thoughts to the exigencies of real life, dared not share them with her; and acknowledged that God made her better and wiser than her unhappy sister Marie.

Sometimes in my days of unreasonable grief, I had doubts of myself; I asked myself if I was not mad, whether the life of joy, pleasure, and oblivion, that escapes sorrow in escaping thought, was not preferable to my way of life. I sought, but always in vain, to resign myself to the weight of the leaden mantle imposed by society on those who accept its yoke, and sought solace in the desire of acquiring knowledge. My aunt approved my love of study, telling me that cultivated talents and accomplishments were very proper in a marriageable young lady; while, for my own part, I only saw in the development of my mental faculties a means of making myself beloved, and adorned my mind for the sake of the being as yet undreamed of, but whom I vaguely hoped time would bring to complete my existence. Whenever I wrote a noble sentiment, I repeated it aloud *to him;* on conquering a musical difficulty, *to him* I sang my triumph; I was proud in dedicating *to him* a good action, but *to him* my thoughts never dared revert when I was dis-

satisfied with myself; in a word, the object of my dreams was not a man, but an angel, a being formed to *love me*. I carefully abstained from speaking to my aunt of my beau-ideal; I sounded her once or twice, and had been told that nothing was further removed from my dream than the reality of a husband; that to indulge such ideas was fatal to young ladies, who should only aspire to a position in society, fortune, pleasure, rich bride's-clothes, and brilliant jewels, and that all other wishes, if unfortunately formed, should be stifled even in thought. How lamentably can man's noblest destination, duty, be denaturalized by society, its usages, its demands. One would sometimes say, that it consists but in the sacrifice of the faculties which are not those of the greatest number, and that we must expiate the crime of possessing the little wit one has, by directing it according to the opinions of those who have none. God has not lighted in his creatures the light of intellect that it may be extinguished in holocaust on the altar of mediocrity; every man, ay, and I dare to think, every woman, should carve out a route according to his or her character; and progression should be our first necessity, as our final duty.

My happiest hours were spent with my grandfather; I became his favourite, and there arose between us an interchange of affection and thoughts; he lived in memory, I in hope, and each contributed to soothe the other's present. My grandfather had prepared for me a little room near his own; they were only separated by hangings; in the night we were able to converse, and in the morning I had only a step to take to give him my first kiss. While he took his siesta, in which he oftener reposed than slept, I played to him, or read aloud, or, seated at his feet, listened for the twentieth time to one of his favourite stories.

This excellent old man was goodness personified; he lived only for others, was happy in making others happy, and enjoyed nothing that he could not share, or give wholly away.

Kindness is to the heart what study is to the mind—an enjoyment which can alone fill the void which the passions or misfortune have left in life. This noble sentiment teaches us to live for others, when to live for oneself would be too painful; and it permits us to indulge in the sweet

emotions of the heart, without the sphere of our own destiny.

I frequently went, during the summer, to Long-Pont, where Madame de Montesquiou welcomed me with extreme kindness; she even suffered me to love her, which I did with all my heart. I often sought her advice, and submitted cheerfully to her benevolent reproof. I had only to interrogate her past life, to see my way clearly. Her brother frequently visited Long-Pont, with his wife and children, who had been so dear to my mother; he behaved with great affection to his orphan niece, and promised her his friendship and protection. The Marquess Jules de Mornay is a man of high character; a lord by birth, he became a man, and preferred the nobility of his mind and heart to the nobility of his emblazonment. Summoned to the Chamber of Deputies, he did not constitute himself the representative of the great and privileged of this world, but the stay and representative of the people: to the service of his native country, and of the unfortunate, he has devoted a life which fate had destined for one of pleasure. His mission is a noble one, and the glory of it is his own! M. de Mornay had espoused a daughter of Marshal Soult, a woman of benevolent character and dignified manners. When she entered the drawing-room at Long-Pont, leading her two children by the hand, the pride of a Roman matron shone on her forehead, and her jewels were as fine as Cornelia's.

Early in the winter my hand was demanded in marriage by M. de L——: I cannot express the profound emotion I experienced when my aunt de Martens conveyed to me his message of love, the first I had ever received. A new power revealed itself within me: my heart beat quicker, pleasure sparkled in my eyes, and on my forehead; I was honoured—felt grateful; and although I had no desire to marry M. de L——, I regarded him as the precursor of the great happiness I had dreamed. I had only seen him once or twice: he was young and handsome, sang admirably, and possessed agreeable manners. Had he whispered to me his love before announcing it to my aunt, I believe I should have accepted him; but there was something so matter-of-fact and reasonable in his declaration, it was so impossible

to poetise it, that I could not find it in my heart to enter the reality of existence without first seeing some of my cherished illusions blossom and fade. It would have seemed to me that I was burning some of the fairest leaves of the book of my destiny, to arrive the quicker at the last page; and I could not conceive of an end without a beginning.

M. de L——'s fortune was an appointment of between four and five thousand francs a-year; and my own wishes according with the wishes of my family, his offer was respectfully declined.

CHAPTER XVI.

In the month of December I left Villers-Hellon to take up my quarters in the pretty room destined for me by Madame de Valence. My grandmother's generous friend received me as if I had been a dear daughter; all my tastes had been consulted, all my wishes anticipated. I found an excellent piano awaiting my arrival, and a personal attendant in an old sister of Mamie's, a kind-hearted creature, excessively devout, who remembered my grandmother at sixteen, and had nursed in her arms some of my oldest and dearest friends and relatives.

I was very happy in the midst of the charming family circle of the Rue de Berry. Madame de Valence was surrounded by her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, the crowning glory of her old age, the beloved links which united her in memory to the joys of the spring, summer, and autumn of her past life.

There were the lady of Marshal Gerard, her eldest daughter, a pious and noble lady, as distinguished by her virtues as her name, her talents, and mind; then there were her three children, Cyrus, Maurice, and Félicie, then Madame Henry de l'Aigle and her lovely little Marie, an angel stolen from Heaven; Madame de Caumont, fair, candid, and affectionate, with her little Bertrand; finally, there were MM. de l'Aigle and de Caumont, M. de Celles, and Marshal Gerard.

Madame de Valence lived in and for each of their loved lives; her eyes, closed with the kisses of her children, opened in the morning to the merry voices of her grandchildren; while for all, her stores of bonbons, toys, advice, and cheerful conversation, were inexhaustible.

It was scarcely day until noon in Madame de Valence's chamber, and I had generally taken a lesson in singing, practised at my piano, and read, before going to breakfast at her bedside. My days I spent very solitary, joining the family circle in the evening. I played a good deal, to the pleasure of Marshal Gerard, who was fond of music; and I was rewarded in seeing him smile, grow animated, and almost join me with his voice.

It was a noble glory, that of the good Marshal, who had written with his sword his patent of nobility, had become great enough in himself to serve for ancestry to his children, and carelessly leaving to history the task of making him admired, undertook himself alone to make himself beloved by his family, and to return their affection by the most amiable indulgence and love.

Marshal Gerard took a quiet walk every evening, dressed in a very modest incognito, and on meeting a moustached old servant of the empire, would enter into conversation with him respecting the Emperor, his glorious victories, and sublime defeats; he would interrogate the old warriors respecting their position, and if they were ill-used or neglected, would see their wrongs redressed. One evening he returned later than usual, and with a gaiety too lively not to be expansive.

The Marshal had met on the Place Beauvau an old pensioner of the Imperial Guard, living on his souvenirs in despite of his wounds, idolizing the past, despising the present, and passing for a victim when he might have passed for a hero. They fell into conversation; and having come to a wine-shop, the serjeant offered to share a bottle with his companion, who refused.

"'That's coming it rather strong!" cried the old veteran. "That means, that an epaulette kicks against drinking with a wooden leg! *Crecoquin!* why Lucifer himself could hardly match you for pride; and though the cowl does not make the monk, you don't look much better than a sub-

lieutenant. To the right-about-face! quick, march! Toss a glass we will, to the memory of the 'Little Corporal.' "

"It is impossible, my old comrade.' "

"What! you are afraid of a scratched face if you go home in your cups,—eh?"

"No, my wife is very indulgent, and no shrew. Come to breakfast with us to-morrow."

"There's my hand on it: and we will drink the Emperor's health, with three times three, without fearing the rascally police or the spies."

They parted; and the next morning a capital breakfast renewed between the two friends of the over-night, an acquaintanceship which petrified the old serjeant, when he found himself the guest of a Marshal of France, who joined him, however, in the toasts drunk to the memory of the Emperor and all his glories. An increase of pension made the poor veteran happy; and for the future, he had two healths to drink instead of one; and to bless his Marshal as he had blessed his Emperor.

Towards midnight, the little drawing-room became a warm solitude; I took Madame de Valence her last cup of tea, and seated myself at the foot of her stove. At first we conversed, and then at my entreaty she evoked her souvenirs: her discourse resembled the flight of a butterfly over all the flowers of her past life, which she intermingled with the gayest and most charming anecdotes, sage reflections, and wit, such as there once was, but such as exists no longer. She told solemn stories of that part which leaves gravestones in our churchyards and eternal void in our hearts. She had been robbed by death of an eldest daughter, whom she passionately loved, a lovely little granddaughter, her mother, her husband, and nearly every friend with whom she had commenced life.

When I sought to interrupt these sadder recollections, she would say, "My child, God ever places resignation near to grief; the thought which causes me to weep, is also the thought which consoles me; my country is no longer in this world, and death which separates us in time, reunites us in eternity."

Frequently Cyrus G——, on leaving the theatre or his friends, would come to finish his evening with us; and his grandmother, whose favourite he was, would, on these oc-

casions display all the resources of her lively mind for his gratification, which gave us lovely and laughing hours nearly until the morning. Cyrus was about my own age, with little, if any more experience than myself: he was clever and accomplished, with the kindest of hearts, and was as much absorbed in the pleasures of real life, as I was in the ideal life of my dreams. We had continually long and violent discussions, without prejudice to a true and solid friendship; the renewal of that childish affection which had united us from our infancy, till about our third or fourth year. I became the confidant of *vieil aîné's* pleasures and youthful follies; while he ridiculed my fantastic airs, and what he called my stilted notions; and he was never prouder than when he made me blush at the account of one of his mad pranks. Sometimes he applied to me for prettily-turned phrases for his love-letters; and showed me rings, lockets, and locks of hair of all shades, which I am free to confess sometimes disturbed my rest.

While we chattered, Madame de Valence, who read all the while very attentively, in order not to become a party to our conferences, often bit her lip to avoid laughing at our sallies; and when we were alone would say to me, "Do not believe a word of what Cyrus tells you; he endows himself with imaginary vices to surprise you, and to give himself a position in the world of your children's children."

I have lost all clue to the paths of Cyrus; I do not know now whether he is a diplomatist, a lion, a sportsman, or a dandy; only, wherever or whatever he may be, sure I am that he is a man of wit and a man of honour.

CHAPTER XVII.

I found Madame de Montbreton in Paris. Her tender amity for me was undiminished, and my admiration of her knew no abatement; I occasionally saw her, and our interviews seemed to me to be too rare and too brief. She presented me to her mother and sister, who lived in the Rue d'Angoulême, so near that of Berry, that Mlle. de Nicolaï

and I met at first occasionally, then more frequently, and, at last, at almost all hours of every day. My family disapproved of this intimacy, on account of Mlle. de Nicolaï's reputation: she had been represented to them as a young person, who in her actions, disregarded the laws of society, and who asserted a greater freedom and independence than belongs even to married women. They dreaded her influence over me; and all Madame de Nicolaï's entreaties, joined to those of her daughter, were requisite to reconcile them to my friendship with the latter.

Marie de Nicolaï had in truth an independence of manners, little in harmony with her position as an unmarried girl. Fancying that she had experienced those sentiments of uneasiness from which I often suffered, and that, more courageous than myself, she had shaken them off, bent on securing her happiness, not according to the ideas of the world, but after her own heart, I felt myself attached towards her by a close sympathy. Alas! I mistook emptiness for depth, love of this world's pleasures for love of the pleasures of the soul; I mistook impressions for sentiments; I had taken sensations for convictions!

Marie exercised the most absolute sway over all who approached her, and her will became the will of the three individuals who ought to have been her protectors. M. de Nicolaï, who stood for nothing in his family, was in the world the honoured honorary member of various agricultural societies and committees, and of all rural associations against fire, and devastation by hail and lightning. He was a man esteeming himself fortunate to be reckoned one among the number of respectable nobodies who constitute the honour and hope of their department; he knew when and how to hold his tongue, keep a good table, and was blessed with one of those excellent digestions that require, after each meal, several hours of quiet meditation, and hence often confer a reputation for deep thinking. Madame de Nicolaï, who in her youth had been gay and giddy, had also then been pretty, coquettish, agreeable, and attractive; but all that had passed away. She repeated, smiling, indelicacies, at the bare thought of which a modest woman blushes; found a name for all which have none in the mouth of a woman; and, in short, had grown wrinkled in years that brought no respect, and the contemplation of which

made me fear to grow old. Madame de Nicolaï, who rather disliked Madame de Montbreton, adored Marie—that is to say, that she realized all her dreams, all her fantasies, and gave her almost boundless liberty. The spoiled child had apartments to herself, an attendant to follow her in the morning, a governess to accompany her in the afternoon, and her mother to introduce her to society. It was in the saloon, more especially, that Marie's independence laid itself most open to notice, and consequent censure. Scarcely had she entered than, left to herself, she was surrounded by young men, while her mother, lost in a distant apartment, in which her love of play retained her, there remained until ill-luck, recalling to mind her duty and her daughter, took her back to her side to enjoy a sound and sometimes snoring sleep.

The third nonentity which revolved about the star of Marie, was a Mlle. Delvaux, one of those respectable articles who take up little room, make very little noise, and understand the difficult art of opening and closing their eyes at exactly the proper time and place—an accomplishment that the great spring of necessity, self-interest, alone can teach. Mlle. Delvaux had invested her life in an annuity secured upon the follies and vices of her pupil; and, with Marie's heedlessness, the price of her stock rose and fell;—she speculated on the young girl's secrets, and already reckoned with certainty on speculating still more profitably on those of the young wife.

The dancing season over, the return of spring brought Lent, religious duties, violets, leisure, ennui, and the reign of intimate friends. Mlle. de Nicolaï, in weariness, promoted me from the dignity of her plaything to that of her confidante; next I became her inseparable; and after some time I became a habit to her heart, while she became an affection to mine. She went very late to bed, and always rose with the sun; very frequently she was in my apartment to await or provoke my awaking before my old attendant Jeanne had entered to undraw my curtains. On these occasions she would seek in my drawers and letters the secrets she accused me of withholding from her; and having convinced herself that I had none, that not one of my dreams had been withered by reality, she imparted to me, with an air of superiority, all the passions she had inspired, and enume-

rated those whom the dangerous sight of her charms had made her victims. She possessed volumes of sonnets, madrigals, and ballads, composed in her honour; pyramidal piles of dried flowers, and other less perishable love-tokens. In our drives in the Champs Elysées, Marie used to delight in initiating me into all the little mysteries of her conquests.

"You see that tall young gentleman passing in his phaeton?" said she, one day; "it is Count Earnest de T——. I dare not salute him, his wife is so horribly jealous. At the last ball given by the English ambassador, he never quitted my side all the evening: and while we danced a cotillon, whispered, as he pressed my hand, that he loved me, and was miserable. Look before you, there is M. de M——, the brother of Madame de N——; his father and sister are almost as anxious that I should marry him as he is himself: but I cannot make my mind up to the match. He is a young courtier of the new school; and I have no idea of adding one to the number of grocers', iron-mongers', and perfumers' wives who now grace the saloons of the Tuileries."

"I admit, my dear Marie, that Louis Philippe cannot pretend to the honour of receiving you."

"Oh! I did not mean to vex you—malice apart. Ah! there is Ernest de G——; he appears to be bowing to you: do you know him? Poor young man! thrice he has pretended to the honour of my hand, and thrice has he been formally refused. Would you advise me now to marry M. H——? The name makes me hesitate; he has no title, not even the little particle 'De,' which is deplorable. But look at that young gentleman on horseback; it is the handsome young Antonin de N——; he would suit me well enough, if all the females of his family were not blue-stockings and wits."

"Yet, I have been told that Mlle. Sabine de N—— possesses a mind as amiable as her Madonna head and bust are beautiful."

"You were never more mistaken in your life: of all the young ladies in the Fauxbourg, she is the most deceitful and disagreeable. Ah! there is M. de M——. Yesterday he robbed me of my bouquet; but as he is almost a cousin, it is of little consequence. With him is M. de B——, a

coxcomb and a gambler, with whom my sister bandies wit, morality, and philosophy two or three hours a-day. There's ——"

"Have done, Marie! I am sure that gentleman is a stranger to you."

"I am not so sure: but hush! be cautious of Mlle. Delvaux. I have many things to tell you to-morrow morning, if, preferring me to your idleness, you will come and take a cup of chocolate with me in my room."

"Is it a secret, a real secret, you are about to confide to me? Answer me that question."

"I pledge you my word, a secret of the utmost importance, one that makes me at once very happy and very miserable."

"I thank you, dearest Marie, for your promise to share it with me. Where there is confidence there is love; and I only wish I had a secret to tell you in return, that I might prove to you my affection is worthy your reliance in me."

Between young girls the confidence of a secret is as important, as it is solemn for her who receives that confidence. It is an initiation to the mysteries of the soul and to the mysteries of devotion. It is, in some degree, an entrance into the paradise of her dreams; a little conspiracy against the absolute power of her family, which would retain its monopoly over her thoughts without relinquishing its monopoly of lectures. In short, it is something sacred, which makes the heart beat high; it is something forbidden, which causes it to tremble.

I was this time most punctual to the rendezvous. Mademoiselle Delvaux had been got rid of, the bolts were drawn, we were alone, and none could overhear us. Marie recounted to me, in a whisper, that, one day at the beginning of winter, having gone on foot with her maid to make some purchases, she had been obliged to enter an omnibus to seek shelter from the rain. A glove of the most orthodox yellow tint, having been tendered to facilitate her ascent, she raised her eyes, charged with thanks, to that amiable glove, when she saw that it belonged to a young man of unexceptionable form and person, who had the manners of a gentleman and the air of a nobleman.

The Rue St. Honoré is very long, and it was necessary to traverse it throughout in order to regain the Rue d'Angou-

lême, during which time both parties examined each other, and enabled each other to divine that the result was perfectly satisfactory. Marie, in negligently playing with her handkerchief, permitted her pretty name, embroidered there at length, and surmounted with a countess's coronet, proud and coquettish, to be seen. The stranger, on receiving some villanous large sous in change from a new and brilliant piece of silver, disdainfully desired the conductor to release him from that disagreeable burden, and to scatter them among some beggars. At last, when Marie desired to descend, he descended first, again offered her his hand, then, having respectfully saluted her, remained immovable in the midst of the rain and the mud, to protect her with his eyes, until the moment when the great door of her *hôtel* was closed between her and him.

Marie thought all day and all night on the meeting of the morning. Next day an irresistible impulse guided her step stowards the Rue St. Honoré; but *he* was not there, and she found that her memory was entirely filled with the image which chance had left in her heart.

Every Sunday, Mademoiselle de Nicolaï attended service at the little church of St. Philippe with her governess. One day, when the crowd was thronging to hear a charity sermon, by the Abbé Duguerry, all the places were found to be occupied, and these ladies vainly sought for a seat, when a grave and slightly accentuated voice offered them chairs, and caused Marie to start. It was he! The seats were accepted with thanks, and the young gentleman went to lean against one of the neighbouring pillars.

During the whole time of the sermon, the ardent gaze of the unknown was fixed on Marie. She felt its weight upon her eyelids; she wished to avoid it; it shamed her; yet if it was averted, she was pained; and despite her will, her eye sought its return.

From that day forth they frequently met, at the Champs Elysées, at the Tuileries, and at St. Philippe. Without speaking, they told each other all. They had their days of confidence and happiness; and their days of sadness, full of jealousy, rancour, and vexation. If he came late to the rendezvous which had been guessed the evening before, without having been indicated, Marie avoided his looks, laughed, talked, and returned with an affectation of amia-

bility the salutations which were addressed to her by the young persons of her acquaintance. Then if he became sad and jealous, or better still, indifferent, she employed a thousand little artifices to console and bring him back. She spoke loudly to Mademoiselle Delvaux what she desired he might hear, let fall a flower from her *bouquet*, and smiled her permission for him to pick it up and wear it at his breast.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I COULD have listened still when Marie ceased to speak. Struck with the romance of that history, greatly flattered at its being confided to me, and glad to find in real life one of those romances which seldom have existence except in the imagination of poets, I overwhelmed my dear little heroine with questions, wishing to know all, even more than she knew herself. I was grieved that I had not more minutely examined the unknown. I looked at Marie and found her much more pretty, since I knew that she was so beloved. In short, my heart beat more strongly than it had ever beaten before, and I felt a new and strange emotion. Marie laughed at my enthusiasm, but she was proud of the effect which her confidence had produced. She confessed to me with entire confidence, that she loved him; that the days were insupportably long when his presence came not to shorten them. She told me that she believed him rich, having often met him in the park on beautiful horses; that she also believed him noble, a foreigner, and a man of the world; for so his manners, elegance, and distinction, bespoke him.

"Ah, well," said I to Marie, "you will deem me silly, but I have one regret—that the denouement is so simple. I should prefer your hero to have been very poor or very humble, in order that you might have had some sacrifices to make for him, some obstacles to brave."

"I thank you for your wish! But seriously, do you believe that I should be able to marry him? I have thought of it

sometimes, but he is a foreigner, not intending perhaps to remain in France. Wherefore else does he not seek an introduction to my mother's house?"

"Is it probable he would do so without your sanction? And then, are you certain that he knows any of your friends, to introduce him?"

"You are right; that is the difficulty! But I wish you to make his acquaintance. I wish to make him understand that you are my friend and confidant. I believe we might meet him at the Musée—will you go with me?"

I consented. We wrote a line to Madame de Valence, to obtain her sanction to our passing that day together; and on entering the Louvre, Marie pointed out to me her unknown. Certainly, imagination could not have invented a hero more accomplished. He was tall, slim, and buoyant. His features were expressive of melancholy, like those of the reapers in the picture of Robert; and in his style, his attitude, and his motions, there was a singular impress of distinction and originality. I observed his salutation of Marie with his eyes, but on encountering my look which was strange to him, and which, perhaps, appeared over scrutinous and curious, he seemed uneasy, and withdrew to a short distance. I then affected to occupy myself exclusively with the pictures. I drew all the attention of Mlle. Delvaux, by consulting her on the merits and defects of the several painters. In short, I wearied myself so generously, and so long, that he became sensible I was a friend, and thanked me with a look full of amicable gratitude. From this moment I became a victim of friendship! I listened for hours together, and with profound attention, to the conversation of Mlle. Delvaux, who had the dullest mind, or, to speak more accurately, a nullity the most burdensome which it was possible to meet with; but I was recompensed by those grateful eyes which rendered to me thanks, and initiated me into all their thoughts and pleasures.

That affection which had already so strongly occupied the dreams of Marie when she was alone, grew more profound and more active through the contact of our two imaginations. We gave to the unknown all our thoughts. Marie wished to know his position, his fortune, to gain him an introduction to her mother, and to encourage him to demand her hand. I promised her to procure information

as to him through my friend Cyrus G——. That to me was very easy, and I learned in a few days, that his name was Felix Clavé; that he was a Spaniard, and a literary man.

These details were a thunderstroke to Mlle. de Nicolaï. "My God!" she cried, "have you not observed, a few paces from St. Philippe, a large white house with a great black sign, on which are several immense yellow letters?"

"No, never."

"Well, that great sign and those large letters, are without doubt the arms and blazon of our noble unknown. It is the *Institution Clavé*."

"I confess, Marie, that this might wound your aristocratic ideas! But because he is the son, or perhaps only the nephew of the chief of an *Institution*, is he less worthy, less distinguished? Is his forehead less noble? Are his mind and his heart less visibly reflected in his eyes? If you are desirous only of making a marriage of interest, I understand your hesitation; but if your heart is his, how will you recover it?"

"My God! I love him still—I shall love him always; but only I could never become Madame Clavé, the wife of a man who gets his money by writing! My mother, my father, would never consent. What part shall I take?"

"Tell him you will courageously sacrifice him to a prejudice, and will see him no more, in order that he may forget you as speedily as you will forget him!"

In spite of myself, this bitterness flowed from me in defence of M. Clavé. In becoming unfortunate, he had become more especially my friend; and that I might not wound Marie, I suddenly broke off the conversation.

Several days passed before we again saw each other. One morning I received from her a short note, entreating me to go to her immediately, as she was ill, uneasy, and unhappy. Scarcely had I entered her chamber, when Marie told me, that having wounded, by her looks of indifference, the pride of M. Clavé, she had not seen him since, that she was in despair at the thought of being remembered by him only as a light and silly girl; and that she was desirous of making him understand that she sacrificed her own ideas to those of her family, her affection to her duty. That it was necessary, indispensable, that she should meet him

again for the last time; and that she had determined on writing to him. I confess, that far from dissuading Marie from that imprudent resolution, I encouraged her. I confess even that I took upon myself, at her request, to write to him these two insignificant lines:—"For health, a promenade in the Champs-Elysées at two o'clock; for salvation, a prayer at St. Philippe." In short, they met; but the looks of M. Clavé were full of repentance and gratitude, those of Marie totally forgot that they came to speak of separation, and spoke only of pleasure and hope; and they never loved each other more than at that moment, when they mutually wished no longer to love.

Next day Mlle. de Nicolaï received, by the post, some enchanting words from M. Clavé, who returned thanks for the kindness which had rendered him more resigned to the sadness and suffering of his poor life; him who adored her on his knees, as the consolation of the afflicted, *the mystic rose of this earth*, &c.: that letter was brought while we were together in the drawing-room. In order not to awaken suspicion, and as it had no signature, Marie showed it to her mother, attributing the poetic expressions of that affecting acknowledgement, to some one of the ancient pensioners of the civil list, among whom she had been charged with the distribution of relief; and she afterwards was highly amused with the pride of M. de Nicolaï, who made her read to all their friends those adulations addressed for her kindness to his daughter. I confess that I could not laugh with Marie at the mistake which she had provoked. The words written from the heart of M. Clavé, seemed to me profaned by being shown to so many indifferent persons; and to listen to undeserved compliments paid by a mother to my supposed good works, would have oppressed my heart. It would have been a thousand times more impossible to receive those felicitations than the most bitter reproaches.

However, we had departed in a fearful manner, from the object of our little note, which was to bring about another last meeting, and another last explanation. Marie felt more pleased and flattered than ever with the love she had inspired. She did not wish to drive M. Clavé to despair, nor did she wish to encourage him; so she answered his letter by one which she desired to be severe, but which was affectionate; she requested him, as a favour, to write no

more to her, and gave him my address, in order that his letters might reach the house of Madame de Valence without danger. My correspondence was not submitted to any examination, I was therefore able to render that service to Marie; and it was decided that I should continue to do so till my return to the country, when it would become extremely easy for them to conduct the correspondence for themselves.

An answer arrived from M. Clavé, followed by others. Marie, with great emotion, read those sweet expressions of love to which she dared not listen. I was even moved myself on reading after her those kind words—the echo of a noble heart.

Sometimes Marie did not answer, but entreated me to do so for her; and then I received those fine phrases of friendship, which are quite as beautiful as the finest phrases of love. M. Clavé had accepted me for his confidant—his friend! I was the *second Marie*, to whom he dared to tell all the afflictions of his heart; who consoled, encouraged, and pointed out to him the glory which he might achieve—the glory which he might oppose to the nobility of the name of Nicolaï.

M. Clavé had informed us of the minute details of his position. He told told us that he was born on the frontiers of Spain, had grown up among the mountains, having large lakes for mirrors, little birds for confidants, and the beautiful stars for friends. Misfortunes had driven his family to Paris. His father, compelled to undertake the education of the children of the rich, in order that he might instruct his own poor children, and give them a position in the world, had piously left in his native land the sword of his ancestors, and relinquished the name of *Villa-Nova* to take that of Clavé. With a noble heart which disdained wealth, and wished to acquire it merely to leave the right of contemning it, without being accused of envy, M. Felix Clavé suffered and sought refuge in poësy. He sent us a collection of his thoughts, and several verses addressed to Marie. If I may judge of those essays by my impressions of the past, I should say they were simple and affecting, and had the impress of a profound belief and a noble ambition.

CHAPTER XIX.

All that part of the life of Marie, who had taken possession of my thoughts, and added a friend to my heart in occupying my thoughts, had, however, increased the void which I found in and around me. How often, when Marshal Gerard passed his hand through the fine hair of his daughter, or regarded his sons with tender pride, was I obliged to run to my chamber to stifle the sighs which rose in my mind towards my poor father! How often, when I saw those happy children protected by the love of three generations, I suffered myself to murmur against the ways of Providence, to weep over my desertion, to count all my tombs, and the black marks which cross so many pages in the book of my life! I had, it is true, an excellent family, devoted friends, but those affections were only secondary; but I had not the right of loving, and, above all, of being loved; and this was my great dream, my great desire!

For a long time I tried to fill my soul with my little well-beloved Antonine: orphans, we loved each other somewhat more than two sisters; but the difference of our characters, of our impressions, of our tastes, prevented that entire intimacy which is to affection what the dew of heaven is to flowers. Antonine had become a handsome and sweet young girl, who had a very good heart, a very calm head, and an imagination which, not seeking its joys in the clouds, threw a prism of happiness over all the realities of life. Without understanding the grief which sprung from my thoughts, my sister shared them when she saw me suffer; and, in the sorrow brought on by events, she wept when I struggled, and bowed her head in astonishment at my wrestling and my combats.

The school of Antonine joined the hotel of Madame de Valence. I passed with her all the hours of her recreation; and to preserve her from the little and great follies of the other boarders, her friends, I studied them, and amused myself in talking of them with her. This school life is a

miniature of the life of the world, and seems rather a school of prejudice, pretension, and slavery, than an academy of truth and virtue. Everything, there, is sacrificed to appearances. These young plants must undergo, at some future time, the fate of those fine stuffs of brilliant colours, which dazzle our eyes, but are tarnished, effaced with the first breath of air, the first ray of the summer sun.

One cannot imagine the importance which is given in these schools to those ordinary beings called men, and who are neither much worse nor much better than ourselves. They make of them *serpents*, *demons*, *spirits of the abyss*, incessantly occupied in deceiving, in fascinating us. A young person ought never to look them in the face; if she respects herself she ought to reply, *Yes, Sir; No, Sir.* A syllable more might compromise them; two syllables dishonour them. In short, I am sure that if one had made all these sermons to our mother Eve, in forbidding her the tree of knowledge, she would have eaten two apples, and we should be doubly unhappy for her fault.

The end of the spring brought a great revolution in our family. My uncle, who wanted five minutes to decide on shutting a door, who put off his toilet to the next day to avoid choosing between a black and a white cravat; my uncle, who ran away when my grandfather spoke to him of marriage, who had so often hesitated, so often drawn back, defeated so often the finest plots against his liberty—my uncle married in eight days, and all alone! This feat, which seems unheard of, was wrought by the power of a graceful and pretty young girl, Mlle. Blanche de Montaigu. It was a suitable marriage in respect of fortune. The betrothed was pretty, rather lively, but very good, having been brought up in the fear of God, and in the love of the husband whom he might give her; and to whom, in short, one could only reproach a too great abundance of ancestors, and a nobility of birth which was rather formidable.

It was a very sad and tiresome wedding. The pride of the bank, opposed to the pride of the aristocratic faubourg, threw, as it were, a mantle of ice over the minds and hearts of the two families. My uncle was quite perplexed with the Counts, Dukes, and Marquises who called themselves his cousins. Mlle. de Montaigu added the patrician *De* to the names of her new relations, which had inherited no such

ennobling particle. On both sides there was no respect shown, no love lost, but much fault found.

My poor grandfather, who had through his life longed, dreamed, and prayed for a wife for his dear and only son; my grandfather, who had been perfectly agreeable to all who surrounded him, was quite disagreeable to his young daughter-in-law. He received her like an absolute monarch, jealous of his prerogative; forgot, in order to contradict her, that he had never had his own opinion with his children; in short, was prouder of his low birth than she was of her ancestors.

Unfortunately, custom required that the new married couple should start alone after the marriage ceremony; and my new aunt, instead of meeting, and overcoming by her affection, the pettishness of an old man, strove against it, and employed to remove it means which excited it the more. One day the mean white curtains were exchanged for pretty silk ones, in order to delight my grandfather, who could not endure them, from their perpetually reminding him of the banishment of his old favourites of dimity. Another time, a piece of furniture which he loved *broken* was mended, or a favourite peasant girl had been treated with haughty kindness; in fact, our dear quiet Villers-Hellon was torn in pieces by civil war; there was a high party and a low party; my grandfather's servants pulled caps with those of my aunt Blanche, who wished to usurp their old privileges. They were obliged at last to send for my aunt Martens to restore peace to this little kingdom: but time, even more powerful than her presence, was also required to bring back calm and oblivion, and to destroy both the unjust prejudices of my grandfather and the exaggerated pretensions of his daughter-in-law. It was necessary that Madame Collard should cause Mlle. Montaigu to be forgotten, and that the noble stranger should learn how to love and to be beloved.

CHAPTER XX.

Two whole months had passed, during which my heart throbbed for the loves of others, during which I read every morning, on awakening, the tenderest sentences, to which I served as a faithful and discreet echo; and every day, being more satisfied with playing the part of *friend*, I found my mission poetical enough not to be envious of the dignity of *idol*. In this world, where there is much talking but little dreaming, it will be difficult to understand a silent love, and still more difficult to understand a silent friendship. Nevertheless, I think I was a true and devoted *friend* to M. Clavé. I at first loved him for the sake of Marie, then for the noble, original, and lofty sentiments which dropped from him in his letters. I understood them all, and partook of some; and if he sent all his love to Marie, all his thoughts, all his sorrows, were for me. I was often more delighted with my letters than Marie was with hers. I read them long, I talked to them; but Marie read hers blushing, seeing little in them except the hour and place of rendezvous.

They sometimes met in the Champs-Elysées, more frequently at the eight o'clock mass, or during a walk which Marie used to take to the house of an old nurse who lived somewhere in the environs of the Faubourg du Roule. Finding that I was of no use at the morning meetings, where there was nothing to guard against but the eyes of a chambermaid, which could easily be closed, I would not give up to them my indolence and my studies; but two or three times a week, I got leave from Madame de Valence to go for a walk with Marie and her governess.

Already the trees were covered with leaves, and the leaves were covered with dust. Everybody rushed to the country; and Marie obtained a few days delay only, in the name of a magnificent fête given at Tivoli for the benefit of some poor dependants of the Civil List. M. Clavé was to be there; and, after much entreaty, I was allowed to go there also, under the protection of Madame de Nicolaï.

This thought given to exile, misfortune, and charity, was translated in magnificent gardens by young and pretty women, who lamented and laughed, chattered and danced, and seemed to be the flowers of this new earthly paradise of beneficence. Many old and ugly dowagers were metamorphosed into poppies, peonies, and marigolds. There were Madame Lehon as a heliotrope, Madame Ch. Laffitte as a cabbage-rose, Madame de Fitz-James as a corn-cockle, Madame de Montaigu as a sensitive plant, &c. &c. Marie was a wild poppy amid a garland of daisies, her companions. There were very few violets, very few heartsease; it was no longer the season for lilies, but there were some flirting little *love-me's*, and some adorable *forget-me-nots*. After the sun had set, a thousand other suns arose radiant with beauty; the flowers took wings to become butterflies, and the ball commenced.

This was the moment at which it had been settled with M. Clavé that we might see each other, come together, and converse freely. The tent prepared for the ball, although very large, was not capable of containing the crowd which flocked into it. Fifteen or twenty little quadrilles were lost amidst groups of lookers-on. The waltz went on, and the waltzers disappeared among the human waves, which caused around them a solitude more profound than that of a desert. M. Clavé advanced towards us without difficulty, and we were able to dance with him several times without observation. The first time that I danced with our friend I trembled so much that I could not speak.

"My good angel," said he, sweetly to me, "speak to me of her, that I may hear her name from your sweet lips. Oh! what have I done to deserve that she should fix her eyes on me, and that you should be my *friend?*"

"I loved Marie, you loved her also—that is the charm."

However, not having time enough to talk of the past, we thought only of the future. M. Clavé asked me to remain as his protectress with Marie. He said that he had expressed to her all the fervour of his love; that he had declared to her that, though unworthy of her until now, he had the ambitious pretension of raising himself to her, and not the weakness to desire to lower her to himself. He said, too, that he asked for three years' grace, that he might offer his sword to Christina, that he might fight until renown or

until death; that Marie, without promising anything, had allowed him to hope, and to await her answer.

"Speak to her of me," said he again, "if she gives her heart to me for the future, it is to you that I confide my treasure; guard it well, my dear Mariquita. It is the name of our mountain maidens, let me bestow it on you, let me mingle your sweet influence in the past, as I entwine it in my hopes."

During a quadrille that M. Clavé danced with Mlle. Nicolaï, a very elegant, and rather free young man, came to talk to Marie, paid her a thousand compliments, and made for her amusement a thousand jests, to which she listened smiling, and with enough of the levity of a coquette. I was alarmed at the gloomy jealousy which instantly appeared in the features of M. Clavé. The rest of the evening he was sad, silent, almost in despair. I could neither cheer him nor calm him. At length, in order to obtain my object, just as we were leaving, I persuaded Marie to give him a flower from her bouquet.

"You are too good for him," said she, "jealous men are unbearable; I am forming his character for him; he will suffer somewhat, but he will only love me the more."

Marie set out the next morning for Busagny at ten o'clock. I went to shut myself up with her for an hour before her departure. The ball of the evening before was the only subject of our conversation. I told her how much I had been touched by the sentiments of our friend, and asked her if she loved him enough to wait three years.

"What nonsense," said she; "I would rather marry him without a sou, than wait three years weeping for my absent lover, like the pale maidens or our German ballads."

"So then, Marie, you are going to forget him?"

"No! be comforted; matches are made in Heaven. Cannot he enter into diplomacy, reassume his name of Villa-Nova, rise rapidly in that honourable career? Is not that possible? But I am becoming infected with the mania which makes you always live in the morrow. Every day has its pleasures and its pains. I have promised to write to him, perhaps—if he writes to you, send me his letters."

I tried to ascertain, indirectly, from Marie, when and how she would see M Clavé at Busagny. She was so profoundly and markedly reserved on this point, that I said

that her silence did not arise from oblivion, but from wilfulness. She remained silent, and I became so; which, however, did not prevent us from shedding tears when we kissed and parted.

CHAPTER XXI.

After the departure of Marie, I found myself quite isolated. I was forced to think and live for myself; and I had entirely forgotten myself since the time when I found all the sentiments and passions which were personal buried, and I may almost say, rusted under those which I gave to my dear neighbours. The hours when the post arrived were the only ones, sweet and peopled as the past. Marie wrote to me endless letters. M. Clavé shared with me his sorrows and his disappointments; and I answered them both in the same tone, and translated the thoughts of one to the other. I sent to them words which would be most balmy to their bosoms; and above all, I spoke not of myself, in order more constantly to speak of them.

After the fête meeting at Tivoli, they had quarrelled; he was jealous, she was angry at his jealousy; he fell sick, she pardoned him; he became worse; she was uneasy. At length he recovered, and wrote word to me that he intended to go to Busagny to see her, perhaps to speak to her; that his existence depended on the following day, which was to unite them. I shared his hopes; I filled my whole soul with them. Alas! that next day was destined to be a dreadful one to me! A letter had arrived from Villers-Hellon, stating that my grandfather was dying! It was my aunt Garat who came to tell me these dreadful news; and we set out together for Villers-Hellon, without hoping again to see our dear parent.

What hours were those! The postilions made the carriage fly along, yet we were in despair at their slowness; we counted the minutes. Alas! death flies so swiftly! It rained, the sky was dark, and seemed to weigh us down. We had brought only little Gabrielle with us, who clung

about her mother's neck when we started; she saw us weep; she embraced us; she closed our eyes with her tiny fingers to stop our tears, now sobbed like us, and then prayed God to preserve her dear grandfather's health.

At some leagues distance from Villers-Hellon our grief became so great, that we could shed no more tears. The cries of the birds of prey of the forest froze us with superstitious fear; we would have given years for one encouraging word; and when we attempted to call for this word, our voices expired on our lips; for the reality might be dreadful, and doubt was life yet. At length we arrived—a door opened, and a voice called out, "He is safe!" We fell into each other's arms, weeping now for joy as we had before wept for grief, and unable, from weakness, to leave the carriage in which we had suffered so much.

For a long time I thought only of our dear restored one. I had been so much struck by the idea of this last separation, this last mourning, that I could not leave him without pain. I slept at night on his couch, holding his hands clasped in mine, and supporting my head on them so as not to quit them during sleep. If he could not sleep, I spoke to him of his old friends whom I had found again at the house of Madame de Valence; I paused a thousand times to embrace him, to gaze upon him; and he, guessing my thoughts, pressed me to his bosom, saying, "Poor child, you have suffered much! But weep no more; smile in those aged eyes which delight in thy joy. Be calmed; I have taken a new lease of life; and I shall some day sing over the cradle of your first-born the songs I sang over your own."

"Dear grandpapa, will you not love my little Jacques more than all your other little children?"

"That I promise you; but will you have the courage to give him my odious name? None of my children have done so yet, and yet it would have rejoiced me; it seems to me that my memory would remain more vividly among you."

"Oh, I assure my dear grandfather, that he will be very proud of bearing your name; and if my little cherub that is to be is not called Jacques, it shall be called Jacqueline. You shall bless it for me. I will pray to God to make it good, like you; and as you have been the joy of my infancy, it shall be the joy of my old age."

For this my grandfather thanked me with a smile; he was

delighted; and long after he spoke of the future, of a loving husband for me, and a fine little grandson for him. As he recovered his health, he went out more, and no longer lived so much for me alone, so that I could again think of the absent.

CHAPTER XXII.

On learning my distresses, M. Clavé sent me a few words full of compassion; after that he wrote to me no more. Marie also had partaken of my fears; but, far from replying to the questions that I had addressed to her concerning *our friend*, she spoke to me little about him; after that she ceased altogether to speak of him, and suddenly wrote to beg of me to return her letters, which might compromise and ruin her. Although a little astonished at this demand, I was going to return them, when a second letter, more urgent than the first, came reiterating the prayer. In expressing certain doubts of my discretion and prudence, Marie told me that she had been compelled to confide in her governess, whose advice and participation had become indispensable to her; and that Mlle. Delvaux had only accepted the part of confidant on condition that Marie withdrew her letters and her confidence from me.

The silence and forgetfulness of M. Clavé were now explained to me. Without doubt they had exacted it of him. So long as they found my friendship of service to them they availed themselves of it, but when the occasion for it ceased, they rejected it; and I suffered and was humiliated at the part which they had given me.

In reply to Marie, I stated, that I would not trust her letters by the post, but that, as I intended to spend a week in Paris towards the end of the month, I would return them to Mlle. Delvaux, whom she could easily send for them. My letter was cold, sad as my feelings, and all the fine and tender sentiments which occurred to me in replying to her could not make me forget.

This double and romantic friendship was so intimately mixed up with all my thoughts and actions, that I was a long time before I could estrange myself from it. I often took up Marie's two letters, and I needed the evidence of my eyes to credit them. In the morning of life, it seems to us that we cannot sufficiently devote ourselves to those we

love; we wish to make them feel that they are dependent upon us, and to convince them that they cannot live without us. We make a future of their future, and we confide in earthly friendship, as we believe in the existence of a God in heaven.

It is in vain that they tell you the affection of man is fickle; it never occurs to one to apply to oneself general truths: all that happens to you, all which surrounds you, you conceive is an exception, and you do not govern yourself by the experience of the world, but by the experience of the heart. It is so painful to awake from one's illusions, that in our progress through life we often fall back upon the past, no more with the same confidence, but with the hope of retrieving those bright days of friendship and abnegation, with the hope of delaying that sorrowful time when one doubts oneself in doubting others; when one cannot find a single hope to cling to; when, having unsuspectingly confided in all, we begin to fancy all deceivers.

Marie herself came to Paris to receive her letters. When we met our hands were clasped in silence; and after some time she hesitatingly told me that I was unjust, that I mistook her prudence for distrust; that she was unhappy; that as she had confided in Mlle. Delvaux, she felt it a duty to be guided by her alone.

"You are aware," said I, "that I never wished to guide you. It is with difficulty that I can guide myself, and I should feel greatly obliged to any kind friend who would show me the right way. But let us be frank, my heart is too heavy for jesting; whence comes this dreadful panic about my indiscretion? Have you forgotten that I am compromised for you as much as you are for him? What has happened to him? Has he shown himself less honourable? Have you commanded him to exclude me from his thoughts? Speak, I entreat you, this shall be the last time; and henceforth I will be as indifferent and heedless as you can wish me to be."

Marie's embarrassment increased; she assured me she had not seen M. Clavé since the ball at Tivoli; that she was not aware what had become of him, nor had she written to him, and entreated me not to attempt to write to him again; then she swore that she loved me as much and as well as ever, and that in reclaiming her letters she only

obeyed Mlle. Delvaux, who considered they affected her future prospects as well as her reputation.

"Good God!" added Marie, "are you quite certain that you have them all? For my part, I have taken the most scrupulous care of yours. I will return them to you if you wish; but seek well for all mine, and all that belong to him. I know the number of them; I could even particularize them all to you."

"Indeed!" cried I with vexation; "Mlle. Delvaux has so profoundly impressed you with her character of meanness and suspicion, that I can no longer recognize my innocent, good, and whimsical Marie. I believe I have all your letters—all those that breathe even a word of your love, *so virtuously forgotten in one day;* they shall all be returned to you; as for mine, do what you like with them. I never will suppress my thoughts and sentiments; but as they were written for you only, keep them faithfully, and preserve them from Mlle. Delvaux. Among the letters which M. Clavé has addressed to me, I will give you all those which speak too warmly of the first Marie. With regard to the others, which only express to me his noble and confiding friendship, I will keep them with affectionate remembrance. Believe me, it is much more easy to learn to love than it is to forget a sincere affection."

The arrival of my aunt Garat interrupted our conversation. Marie was compelled to depart without her precious little packet of letters, which she longed for so earnestly; and it was arranged that Mlle. Delvaux should fetch them early on the next day, before we set off for Villers-Hellon, where we were soon to be re-united with Antonine, all covered with medals and laurels, blessed with six weeks' holidays, which she was very impatient to spend in the country.

Impressed with the importance of her mission Mlle. Delvaux arrived early in the morning; requested to see me alone; and I was compelled to closet myself with her in order to listen to a long harangue on the dangers of my thoughtlessness, and on the candour of Marie, who had confessed to her her follies, and had chosen her for her friend. According to Mlle. Delvaux, my conduct appeared to her much more unpardonable than that of Mlle. Nicolaï. I would have withdrawn the confidence of a pupil from her

governess; encouraged a blameable stupidity; indeed, *I was alone to blame;* and that it was only to save *my* future prospects, *my* honour, that she had consented to conceal all from Madame de Nicolaï, &c.

These cruel and hypocritical remarks wounded my feelings, and hurt me so much, that I determined to punish them. I appeared frightened, and replied to Mlle. Delvaux, that not having the happiness of possessing so wise and prudent an adviser as herself, I had resolved to confide all to my aunt Garat, who would find some means of extricating me: and that, therefore, I would permit her to act according to the dictates of her duty and conscience, and to communicate all that imprudent intrigue to the mother of her pupil. I added, that I did not withdraw my letters: and not well knowing where to find Marie's, I could not return them at that time.

Mlle. Delvaux's consternation made me smile, and quite revenged me. She entreated, she humbled herself to overcome my determination of confiding in my aunt, and tried every artifice to obtain the letters. But if I re-assured her a little on the first subject of her fears, annoyed and indignant as I was at the weakness of Marie and the craftiness of her new adviser, I insisted on their yielding the second point, and I left for Villers-Hellon without returning the letters; however, Marie's constant entreaties, and an ample apology from Mlle. Delvaux, made me renounce my little cruelty, and I charitably returned them the required correspondence.

These letters, although sufficiently impassioned and extravagant to induce a desire for their being burnt, were not sufficiently so, that they should wish to regain them by entreaties, threats, and unworthy suspicions. I was aware that many things were concealed from me; that they had not told me what had given them the formidable power to ruin and dishonour me; and if I forgave M. Clavé, who, being in love, had become a slave; and if I tried to pardon Marie, who, in being weak, had deceived me, I still retained a triple rancour towards Mlle. Delvaux; and, if she had been worth the trouble, I should have hated her.

I had committed an error, by concealing and partaking in a weak and imprudent action. I had already been punished by a thousand sad recollections, ungrateful and deceitful ac-

tions. I had now to atone for them in a more cruel manner. My aunt Garat's maid, astonished at Mlle. Delvaux's mysterious and designing manner, and not knowing her, had listened at the door, heard her charitable appreciation of my character, and at last, being alarmed, had thought it her duty to inform my aunt, after I had left Paris for Villers-Hellon.

This new edition of Mlle. Delvaux's words, embellished and augmented as related by a lady's maid, made my aunt very indignant, and in the paroxysm of her rage and uneasiness, she wrote me a dreadful letter, and one equally terrible to my aunt De Martens. She, who was instructed to interrogate me, was at first very severe. She demanded a full confession; and as I would not betray Marie, insisted that it was my duty to reveal all to her, and that she would not listen to any imperfect explanations; she desired me to reflect for two hours in my chamber; after which I returned to the presence of my inquisitor, telling her all which could injure myself only, magnifying my own faults in order to diminish Marie's, still resolved not to betray my friend.

"My aunt, my good aunt!" replied I, "you are doubtless correct, but it will not render me more virtuous to betray my friendship, faith and confidence. That which you call prudence, I call perfidy. I cannot make up my mind to be wise according to the world, and wicked according to my own heart. My aunt, my dear aunt, you may scold me, punish me, but have pity on me, and do not wring from me a secret which is not mine to disclose."

My aunt not only let me remain silent, but she embraced me, and lectured me in a good and touching manner; she then promised to write and excuse me to her sister, to obtain forgiveness for me, which would console me for the severe comments in her morning's letter, which she wished me to discard from my memory.

"You know," she said to me, "that worthy Louise cannot subdue her first impressions. You know also, that when we are irritated, it occurs to us all to utter the most offensive and disagreeable things; at all events, you know your aunt soon forgets; courageously acknowledge your errors, and repent of them with all your heart. So, burn this letter, which made you weep for eight days, and which you did not deserve to receive."

In spite of these words I kept that letter which had

caused me so much grief. I wished to oppose it to any fresh suspicions of Marie; I wished her to know how I could love my friends, and suffer to keep their secrets. Lord! Lord! in recalling these recollections, I am struck with the grandeur of thy designs, and I humble myself before thy Providence, so severe but so just is thy awful dispensations! This letter, which my pride had converted into a palm of martyrdom, with which I would glorify myself before my friend, was to make me blush and bow my head, and serve as a basis for the terrible accusation brought against me.

This, my first fault, was to my life what the avalanches are to the Swiss valleys; originally formed of a small portion of earth, they increase in size, whirling through the snow, they destroy flowers, bushes, up-root trees, rocks, forests, precipitate themselves into the plain, and become one vast tomb, beneath which are buried grandfather, mother, and child. Jesus Christ, crucified to efface the sins of man, has diffused over the world a great tenet of expiation; and we poor creatures, must pay with grief and death, the great debt of our weaknesses, our rebellions, and our sins.

CHAPTER XXIII.

This year the autumn was gay and brilliant at Villers-Hellon. In addition to our party of young girls, were added our kind and good little aunt Blanche, who was loved by my grandfather a little, and had already become greatly endeared to us. Her sister, the Countess de Bongard, who viewed every person and everything smilingly; M. de Bongard, amiable, sprightly, and clever at the piano; and to complete the whole, Edmond and Marie de Bongard, romping children, good and sprightly; who made an admirable noise, were full of gaiety, and served well for a *vis-a-vis* in a country dance.

It is a delightful period that of holidays. Fernand de Montesquiou, Antonine, Edmond, would willingly have

compressed a whole year's amusement into the space of a month: all their imaginations were tortured to devise a new pleasure for each day. The baptism of the young bells, which were about to change the broken tones of our old set of bells into clear and sonorous notes, became a great occasion of festivities and parties. My grandfather and my aunt Garat, my aunt De Martens and M. Elmore, my uncle Maurice and I, were deputed to name them; and after the priest had blessed and christened these great echoes of the religious world, and which resound to heaven the murmured prayers of our hearts, we had a ball, confectionary, and a delightfully gay evening.

I had too often need to exile my souvenirs, far from myself, and far from those whom I had loved, that I might not be obliged to substitute to my favourite hours of solitude and reverie a continual activity of mind and body; I studied hard, rode much on horseback, spent all my evenings either in dancing or in music; in short, I lived in a state of excitement, which left no time for thought. My aunt Garat had so affectionately pardoned me, that after having endured her displeasure, too violent to be just, without remorse, I felt quite guilty when I received her caresses and indulgence, and unhesitatingly submitted when she expressed a desire that I should cease all correspondence with Mlle. de Nicolaï.

No longer to be permitted to write; no longer to be permitted to reflect, was very sad! They sometimes discovered that the gaiety I assumed was fictitious; and my grandfather, who understood all my feelings, tried every means to divert my attention from unavailing regrets. One day he prevailed on my uncle Maurice to take me a long excursion on which I had long wished to venture; our desire was to visit Bourneville, a splendid estate belonging to the Duke de Noailles; to see the sun set from the feudal castle of La Ferté-Milon; and to return by moonlight through the lofty groves which are so beautiful in that part of Villers-Coterets.

The concurrence of a great many things was essential to the practicability of my project; the permission to run the risk of fatiguing myself rather more than usual, a fine day, without too much sun; and a fine moonlight night. I had achieved all this; the horses were saddled, I had only been kept waiting one hour for my uncle, and all that remained

for him to do was, to put on his cravat, and give about twenty orders; when, alas! who should arrive but one of his neighbouring friends, who had come to spend the day with him. My good grandfather, who had anticipated pleasure from my pleasure, was as much annoyed as myself at this apparition. Witnessing my vexation and impatience, he prevented the sermon which was already on my aunt's lips in order to moderate me, by advancing to meet the Count de C——, and telling him that our horses were saddled, and that after breakfast we would escort him home on our road to Bourneville. This said, to avoid any impossibilities which a maturer deliberation might discover in our project, thus reviewed, altered, and inconveniently encumbered by a young man of five-and-twenty years of age, my good grandfather took care to leave the unwelcome visitor scarcely time to swallow a cup of tea, made us mount hastily on horseback, and wished us a pleasant journey.

When I was out of all danger of a counter-order, and when my uncle and his friend were riding by my side, I more attentively scrutinized M. C——, of whom I had seen very little, but of whom I had heard much. He was described as a regular "kill-'em and eat-'em" of young girls; he was, they said, a very bad fellow indeed, whose conduct was as immoral as his words and sentiments. He had deserted a young person who was to have become his wife, and whom he had ruined. He devoted himself to such orgies at O——, that his mother could not enter his house; and then—and then—they finished by speaking in whispers; and the ears which were not under the power of a husband were obliged to close themselves, or were sent away.

This reprobate creature was of short stature, but of good figure; with a countenance full of expression, frankness, and noble intelligence. He chatted in a very friendly way with my uncle, and took no notice of me. This want of gallantry, which appeared natural enough during the first half hour, appeared very annoying to me at the end of an hour; and in order to amuse myself, or perhaps to divert the attention of the others, I lashed my horse into a full gallop, and was off like a dart. When I stopped, my uncle was at a great distance, M. C—— close to me.

"Mon Dieu! Mademoiselle! Were you run away with?" he said to me, earnestly.

"Yes, carried off by a desire of independence, but not by my horse."

"What! does the word independence find a place in the dictionary of a woman of the world?"

"No, certainly not; but it is a word engraven on all our young hearts, and is one for which I have a particular esteem."

My uncle just then overtook us, in a very bad humour, and began a long harangue on my fantastic freak. "Pray, dear uncle, be good," I said; "for it is still more tiresome to be scolded than to be forgotten."

The gentlemen began to laugh at my betraying my little feminine *ruse*, and we trotted gaily on, all three of us. After two hours' delightful ride, we left the forest and entered a charming valley, surmounted by a castle with gothic towers, the cheerful, happy, and chivalric air of which made me express an immoderate desire of visiting it.

"That is O——, where I shall be most happy to receive you," said Mr. C——. "Maurice, I shall quarrel with you, if you do not yield to your niece's desire."

"I am much obliged to you, sir. You have a pretty eyry there, quite picturesque and feudal; but I will more closely inspect it some other time;—to-day it would delay us, and our moments are precious."

My uncle and M. C.—— remained a little behind together, and after a very long confabulation, a servant darted off like an arrow for O——; and my uncle told me that we could pass through the gardens and court on horseback, and that I might pluck a bunch of grapes without dismounting. All was as he wished. This delightful abode appeared more beautiful and remarkable viewed near than from a distance. They told me that there was no one there; however, I saw at a window in the first story a hand undrawing a curtain, and which appeared to me too delicate for that of a cook. This action, and my observance of it, did not escape my companions, and they precipitately gave a signal for departure.

After galloping for a long time, M. C—— asked my permission to accompany us in the remainder of our ride.

"Ask my uncle," I replied. "I know he would be but

too proud of your company; but I am doubtful of its propriety, and whether we shall not incur thunders of censure for so doing."

"Would you, Mademoiselle, be uneasy at incurring these censures and calumnies?"

"No; but very impatient of sermons."

"You are not then free."

"Free! I am like all the young girls of this beautiful France, brought up under a despotic government; I must make my character subservient to the will of the great autocrat, who will one day elevate me to the dignity of a married woman."

My uncle was some distance before us, humming a favourite air from the opera of *Marie*, and my conversation with M. C—— continued for some time, now gay, then serious, always sarcastic and stinging, and very free in its manner of treating things.

"Already!" cried M. C——, when it was time to separate. "Already!" replied an echo in my breast.

A month had elapsed after this ride, when my aunt De Martens told me that she was occupied with a treaty of marriage for me; that I had made a conquest of M. C——, and that he wished me to marry one of his friends. M. Felix de V——."

I do not know why the beginning of this sentence made me tremble and blush, neither can I say why its termination threw me into a desperate fit of ill-humour.

"It is no doubt, by way of contrast, that M. C—— becomes a surety for his friend. He wishes, no doubt, that we may see the disparity between them, and that that disparity may become my surest guarantee."

"What admirable severity! and yet you told me, on your return from your ride, that you found him both amiable and clever."

"That is true; but I now think him very impertinent in the part which he is about to enact."

"You may continue to think so, but still behave graciously to him. This is a suitable marriage for you; your grandfather wishes it; and I know Felix is wholly guided by his advice."

A grand hunt was proposed in order to secure an interview, but the weather being unfavourable, rendered it im-

possible to quit the saloon and the fireside. My aunts were quite amiable, and placed favourably in relief all the talents, wit, and virtues I possessed, or rather, *those I ought to have had.*

My grandfather could not avoid showing, by some phrases and inuendos, that he was in the secret, and very favourably disposed to its success. In short, M. de V——, as much embarrassed and as much *ennuyé* as myself, seemed to have entrusted the task of pleasing to M. C——, who took too much trouble to make me appreciate his friend.

All day the *corvée* was complete. After dinner they made me play a piece on the piano, of a professional difficulty, sing a grand aria, and M. C—— came and sat near to me, and asked me for Weber's waltz. While I played to him this mournful and last composition of the great German musician, an inconceivable sadness took possession of him whom I had formerly seen so sprightly and witty; he leaned his brow on his hands, and appeared absorbed in painful recollections.

"You are in pain," said I; then involuntarily, under the influence of bitter feelings, I added, "is that also by proxy, and for M. de V——."

He looked at me with an air of astonishment, and replied, with vivacity, "Does this marriage displease you? Be frank, I beg, and pardon me for being so selfish in wishing to retain you in our forest, for our pleasure and that of Felix."

"No doubt M. de V—— would appear amiable to me, if he would try to appear so in his own person."

"You punish him, then, for having chosen me as his interpreter?"

"No; but I had believed, sir, that you thought a little less like the rest of the world, and that, after having spoken to me some days ago of your disgust for the sad and unnatural traffic which is made of marriage, you would have abstained from making yourself its apostle, and me the subject of your experiment."

"Do you never intend to marry?"

"I do not wish an end without a beginning. I wish to be loved seriously before I give away all my life, all my heart, all my will."

"Pardon! a thousand pardons! I knew that you were

amiable and witty, but I feared that you might not have common sense."

"And now do you doubt it?"

"Now, I appreciate that which pleased me, in you."

I forgave M. C—— his wrongs, and my grievances; imposing on him as a penance, an entire sincerity, and the obligation of giving himself a great deal more trouble to hinder the marriage, if it did not please me, than he had taken to ensure it success without my consent.

He told me that M. de V—— was of a faithful and generous disposition, but violent and despotic; that he wished to marry, that he might possess a wife, a fortune, and a more agreeable position; that my heart was not considered in these arrangements; and that for many years past, M. de V—— had entertained for a woman of the world a passion of which he was but imperfectly cured.

"Perhaps," added M. C——, "I am wrong to confess all this to you. To make amends for an imprudence, I betray Felix. Your happiness is become so precious to me, that perhaps I become unjust and partial. Speak of it to M. Elmore; believe him rather than me; afterwards your will shall be done."

M. C—— asked me again *how* I had been so good as not to partake of all the prejudices which assailed him in the world; and if it was in ignorance of his *crimes*, or through goodness of heart that I had been so sincerely amiable with him during our long promenade with my uncle.

I owned that I was not ignorant of any of the accusations which pursued him, and that far from being frightened by them, like others, he inspired me with a confidence as great as would the young man most perfect and estimable in the eyes of the world.

"Oh! thank you, thank you," he said to me; "interest and pleasure draw around me many young men, but I have no friend. They think me very foolish, very bad, very extravagant; I am, above all, very unfortunate; and my life counts more afflictions than faults!"

"Marie, give up the piano to your aunt," said my grandfather, approaching us; "she will have the goodness to play while you dance; and you know that enlivens my old thoughts."

"You are going to dance?" whispered M. C——.

"I must. A young lady who wants to marry, must make the most of all her little advantages. It is your fault."

"And you will dance with me?"

"No; M. de V—— advances towards me; I read in the eyes of my grandfather that he must be accepted. Dance with one of my cousins."

M. de V—— was perfectly silent, and his system of amiability by proxy was so strictly followed, that one might have said that he had enjoined his friend to fix his eyes upon me, and to make me blush under his looks.

At the moment of departure, M. C—— entreated me to talk with M. Elmore, and to dictate to him my orders through that friendly interpreter.

The next day, when I spoke of this marriage to M. Elmore, I found him as disinclined to persuade me to it, as he had been impatient the evening before to see it accomplished. He told me, as had M. C——, that M. de V—— had but little fortune, a character too despotic to agree with mine, and an actual passion which was no secret to any of his friends; finally, he induced me to refuse; and it was agreed on between us, that he should take upon himself, with M. C—— to cause the project to fail, without my having to brave the will of my grandfather, and the imperious advice of my aunts.

On the occasion of the departure from Villers-Hellon, my grandfather wished to keep me to himself alone; that was a happy month, during which I was beloved and spoiled, and put quite out of reach of all lectures, governesses, and vexation. I had found in my aunt Blanche a friend. She almost obtained from me some of my love for my grandfather. He also was less unjust, and was no longer averse to her, when I preached to him a litany of praises in honour of his daughter-in-law; in short, we were all as nearly happy as we could be.

In the month of December, my aunt received a visit from her father the Comte de Montaigu. His friends called him an original; his enemies—I have, no doubt, forgotten what. But what does it matter? I am one of his friends, and I only found in him a *lion* of sixty; perfectly good and kind. M. de Montaigu had set up his household gods at the Opera, had obtained letters of naturalization on the soil of

the Royal Academy of Music, and had not missed a single performance for forty years.

My aunt's two brothers accompanied their father. The elder, who was much talked of, was a perfection of talents and virtues; the second, who was not talked of at all, was a wild noble young man, who had turned soldier to gain his epaulettes with the edge of his good sword, who conquered a horse with boldness, but blushed before a woman, even before a girl.

A few days after this visit, my uncle Maurice had the glory of becoming a father. For a whole hour he and I stayed with my aunt, and afterwards I endeavoured to console him amid the cries of the poor invalid, which reached even the drawing-room to which we had been banished. These cries were so sad, so alarming, that sometimes through horror I forgot to comfort my uncle; and understood why the divine Diana, having been obliged to act as midwife to her mother, was so greatly alarmed that she gained, from the circumstance, courage to remain an old maid during eternity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I RETURNED to Paris late in the season of balls and pleasures; and my aunt Garat, always kind, and wishing to initiate me a little to this world of dissipation, presented me to such of her friends as received company. My aunt's circle consisted of the most elegant women of the Chaussée d'Antin, of bankers, of money brokers, and of men stupid enough, but in the fashion. Certes, gold was not a chimera in this part of the world; being the aim or the means, the beginning or the end of all things; tongues vaunted it, brows were adorned by it, and many women created from it wit, grace and beauty. The pride of gold is more intolerable than the pride of ancestry; to cover oneself in the shadow of our forefathers, in order to appear great, virtuous, and powerful, is a false pride doubtless; but to cover oneself with gold, and to fill up with crowns all the gaps and nulli-

ties of one's person, is not to have even an idea of that which makes of man a great and noble creature.

Among these gilded divinities were some exceptions, such as Madame de Vatry, full of grace, wit, and talents; Madame Wells, who possessed a goodness graceful as her beauty; and Madame la Comtesse Lehon, who was an adorable woman, and a woman much adored.

I saw no more of Marie de Nicolaï; I obtained even rarely permission to pass a day with Madame de Montbreton. Thus, after having so much loved, I was without a friend; but during three months, I mixed so much in pleasure, that I did not suffer from this total void, and I lived without interchanging a thought that was not one of balls and society.

Two young persons interested themselves in my life; one was Mlle. G——, who was amiable, pretty, and spoke in raptures of the ball of yesterday and to-morrow; the other, Mlle. M——, with whom I talked of the future and of husbands; but husbands according to the world, husbands loved and desirable as forerunners of bridal clothes and presents, of independence and pleasure. Pauline was a most amiable girl, with the character of a spoiled child, and a mind which she seldom employed. Having lost her mother at an early age, she had become the idol of her father, M. M——, who possessed a fine fortune, a handsome figure, really good qualities, and who assumed all the vices of fashion.

After some tedious balls, at which, not knowing any body, I had the honour of dancing at the request of my aunt or of the mistress of the house, and with partners disagreeable enough to be polite, I was introduced at some delightful parties, where I amused myself with all the sprightliness and intensity of my character.

At the request of Madame Wells, who was to give a masked ball in Lent, my aunt undertook to organize a quadrille, and we had the presumption to dance a *pas du ballet* from Gustavus. Our lessons in the Styrian graces procured us a whole month's amusement; Mlle. Gautier being of the quadrille, all our rehearsals took place in her mamma's drawing-rooms, which were still impregnated with the remembrance of former grand balls, and always filled with her Bordelais talented, amiable, and indefatigable dancers. There was a peculiarity in Madame Gautier's soirées, which

consisted partly in the grace with which she presided, and much in the freedom, cordiality, and gaiety which were displayed by all the youth who resorted thither.

Madame Alexis Dupont and M. Mazillier had undertaken to make us as graceful Styrians as possible. The first lessons were discouraging, intolerable; then we improved a little; then became tolerably graceful, and at last we gained the entire approbation of our illustrious tutors, and when the grand day arrived, or rather the brilliant night, decked in our gay costumes, we obtained splended success, applause, and compliments. My partner was a young English colonel, Mr. Martin, the principal dancer in our troop. He was amiable, but chiefly admired for his coolness, and the despair he manifested when I neglected to study my part seriously and properly. Mlle. Gautier had a young Bordelais, M. Sarget, for a partner, who danced very ungracefully, but very willingly.

In giving an account of all my balls, I cannot omit to mention the excellent waltzers who enlivened them, MM. Durieux, de Carcy Courpon, de Lamarthonie, who possessed figure, mind, manners, the waltz of a gentleman, &c.

With Lent all these amusements ceased; and to these days, which were enlivened by the recollection of past fêtes and the anticipation of future ones, succeeded days of solitude and idleness. I was barely able to find my aunt disengaged for ten minutes during the day, for the visits commenced at noon, and she passed her evenings at the theatre, or with her intimate friends. I endeavoured to resume my studies and occupations, which had been pleasant and easy to me during past years; I only half effected it. I tried to recall my souvenirs to my aid; I was not more successful. Some vague figures glided smoothly through the memory of my imagination, but they danced and whirled in my brain; none of their words resounded in my soul without an eternal accompaniment; they were friends *à grand orchestre*. The joys of this world, which attach themselves neither to the heart nor the mind, leave behind them a void, discouragement, and an intolerable discontent of oneself and others.

I have already said my days were sorrowful; I will add that they were unchequered. A walk for health, at two o'clock in the day under the protection of an old and cross

English governess; an evening during which my cousin and I were yawning, without the courage to speak, lest we should increase our *ennui;* and, lastly, some advice which our Argus imparted to us in the form of sermons.

What a wretched existence! And while we were thus living in Paris, at Villers-Hellon trees were budding, violets sprang up lowly and fragrant among the moss and meadow grass, the birds were warbling, and the sylph-like butterflies re-appeared to flutter over the sweet flowers of peach and almond trees! All nature was gay and happy!

My days passed, then, in regrets for this life of the spring: in regrets for my grandfather, my old nurses, and for my beautiful Eyram. It was less than a regret, and more than a recollection of M. C——, a friend of an hour, of whom I could not think without blushing, and of whom I dared not speak without speaking a little ill of him, which I did not think.

The amusements of the winter had tired and lulled my imagination; it revived again in solitude and silence more exacting than ever before. It said to my heart, "What friends hast thou?"—it no longer had any. It demanded of my reason what was its object? and my mind was as silent as my heart. Then the powerful despot created dreams of of happiness, of love, in spite of truth, of prudence, and sometimes even of my will. One only little graceful, charming creature smiled on my isolation, and made me forget it. This was Gabrielle, the second child of my aunt Garat, a little girl and little angel of three years, the joy and pride of its mother.

I shared with a majestic Newfoundland dog all the predilections of Gabrielle. We often, all three of us, passed hours together in playing at hide-and-seek, racing, and romping, till at length dog and child would fall asleep on the carpet. The little fair head of Gabrielle would repose on a cushion at my feet, and its two little delicate and rosy arms would, like a collar white and rosy, embrace the neck of the good Betzi; and I watched them in admiration; and if perchance I took up a book, and the child in waking did not meet my eyes, she would say to me with her sweet voice—

"Do not read, but love us while we sleep."

Among other favourite games of this dear child, was that of making me go to sleep; then she would close my eyes with her little fingers, nurse my head upon her knees, and if she thought I really slept, would cunningly untie the riband of my hair, seize my head, cruelly torture me, and afterwards repay my loss of stolen hairs with such sweet kisses, that I would have willingly become bald to deserve them.

One of my greatest pleasures was to be allowed to take Gabrielle with me in my morning walk. I decorated her then more elegantly than usual; I myself curled her fair and playful ringlets; I displayed a proud and motherly gravity; and leaving the nurse and governess at some distance behind, I led her by the hand through the long passages of the Tuileries; I called her my child, and it seemed to me that everybody envied me my beautiful angel, and considered me as doubly woman, and doubly worthy of respect.

One day that I had my gracious *decoration* in my hand, Gabrielle, pulling my sleeve gently, said—

"Listen to that gentleman; he says that I am prettier than a kitten."

I indeed saw at some distance from us a young man, who in following us cast an eye of admiration on my little treasure, smiled at her, and also in return received sweet and expressive smiles. This intrigue, childishly coquettish, lasted the whole of our walk.

Some time after that, I met at the Louvre Gabrielle's admirer; he was passing simultaneously with us through the great gallery, and, as at the first time, followed us to the door of the Bank. The next day—the following days, brought the same meeting; if we entered a shop, he waited for us outside; if we turned, he did so likewise, with indefatigable patience; his eyes were never off me; if I smiled, he smiled also; if I were sad, he would read my looks with anxiety. My eyes, which had at first sought for my unknown with curiosity, were soon accustomed to find him, and no longer avoided a silent greeting or the sorrowful adieu which he addressed to me as the heavy door of our hotel closed. It was an amusement of mine which my *ennui* received without refleetion, and with which my vanity was very well satisfied.

The deportment, the figure, the style of dress, of the monsieur who attended our promenade, bespoke infallibly the gentleman. Tall, thin, pale enough for one to suppose that he had a secret pain, or at least a slight touch of consumption, having expressive eyes, varnished boots, and yellow gloves of the most becoming shade; he had been pronounced a very noble gentleman by our old English governess, who, far from making herself uneasy on account of these meetings, told me that the young ladies of her country thus begun their courtship, and showed herself flattered in having a scholar who deserved the attentions of this noble gentleman.

CHAPTER XXV.

These little romantic meetings, the remembrance of which lightened my serious thoughts, not being a mystery, and being rendered somewhat ridiculous by the expressions of our imprudent governess, would have been very innocent and harmless, if at the same time there had not unhappily fallen into my hands a novel written from the heart; written with spirit and animation, which affected me deeply. In this interesting work, the hero Anatole follows everywhere the woman whom he loves; saves her life; shows her the most passionate affection; writes to her; causes himself to be loved by her without seeking to approach her, and without seeking to speak to her. After five or six hundred pages—after Anatole is adored not only by her whom he loves, but still more by the reader, we discover that he is deaf and dumb; one weeps, one would weep for ever if she did not marry him, if they were not perfectly happy—

thanks to Abbé Sicard, who teaches the language of signs to the beautiful and noble friend of the hero.

How shall I dare to say that I was foolish enough to dream of a deaf and dumb man in my unknown admirer? that I wished him this misfortune; that I saw the symptoms of it on his countenance, in his sadness, in his eyes?

Not being able to comprehend the questioning solicitude of my gaze, he showed himself happy at meeting it so frequently; and after having followed us for two hours, he stopped two hours longer under the windows of my aunt's saloon.

One Sunday he came to prayers near us, in the chapel of Calvary at St. Roch; the following Sunday he was there also. On leaving, he offered the holy water to the old governess, then to me; and when my glove slightly touched his to receive from it the drop of holy water, I saw him raise his glove respectfully to his lips, and thank me with a look full of gratitude.

I was accustomed to take violets and roses frequently to my aunt; and for this little purchase I stopped frequently at a shop in the Passage Vivienne. My *shadow* stopped there near me, and generally attached to his buttonhole one of the flowers I had touched in selecting mine.

One day, when he had preceded us a few minutes at the shop of the pretty flower girl, she presented me with a bouquet of beautiful white roses.

"Oh! how beautiful they are!" exclaimed I; "I believe that you wish to ruin me."

"Oh!" replied she, with a smile; "give me for them what you please, but keep them. I wish you to give me hansel this morning; it will bring me good luck for the whole day."

Without waiting for my reply, she wrapped them up in tissue paper, and recommended me to carry them carefully, so as not injure the leaves, and to put their stems in water on arriving at home. I carried my bouquet with an inexpressible sentiment of vague expectation, which I dared not avow to myself, which I could not explain to myself; and which, however, made me blush when I met the beaming look of my unknown admirer fixed upon my bouquet.

Having entered my chamber, I immediately broke the

thread which confined the stems of the beautiful flowers. A small piece of paper fell upon the carpet—I picked it up, and read it hurriedly. It was a declaration; words of love which told me that I was beloved, passionately beloved, and for ever! . . . .

I thought that I dreamed! I squeezed the little note to assure myself of its reality. I looked at myself in the mirror to see if I was more handsome since I was beloved; in short, I was a little crazed; and notwithstanding my desire to enter advisedly on this grand phase of my life, I leaped with joy like a child, and I read again and again all the charming exaggerations which I had inspired. I confess that the wise thought never entered my head of confiding the secret of my little note to my aunt or my governess. I knew that I did wrong, but my imagination chased this salutary reflection, by shouting in its joy, loud enough to stun me, that I was twenty years of age, that I was an orphan, and my own mistress.

I passed the whole night without sleep, wishing to reflect seriously upon the conduct which I should adopt, but unable to find one reflection which had not been altered and falsified by this rapid transition from depression to exaltation, from a yearning void to the dazzling reality of a first love-letter.

However, at the hour of our customary walk I pretended a violent headache, so that I might not give him an opportunity of reading in my eyes that I felt happy and flattered by the little, audacious, and impassioned note of the previous evening; but I could not suppress my curiosity from approaching the window, and his eyes encountered mine! I assumed a dignified and severe air; but one of his roses forgotten in my hand, destroyed its effect . . . The expression of triumph and success which the sight of this flower called to the countenance of my unknown wounded me, and I resolved to punish him for it. The whole of this and the next day I renounced not only my walk, but also my window-or at least I hid my head so well between the thick folds of the curtains, that if I saw him he could not see me.

The third day, having remained for a long time and very uselessly in my silken lurking-place, I approached the window:—he was not there; he did not come. I went out for my usual promenade; I had to wander up and down the long

avenues of the Tuileries alone, and depressed in spirits as of old . . . He had consigned me to the oblivion I had provoked by my conduct! I was melancholy, afflicted, unhappy, miserable, at this indifference: it seemed to me that I was doomed to remain alone upon the earth; that God had decreed all my life should be love, but that I should be condemned never to be loved again: abandoned to regret and utter hopelessness.

Directly that he ceased to love me I believed that I loved him; I searched my heart; I was terrified at the least symptoms of love that I discovered there; and when, eight days afterwards, not hoping for him more, I found him, sad, pale, and unhappy, looking towards my window, I was foolish enough to listen to the dumb prayer, which demanded of me an answer; to write to him that I had suffered from his forgetfulness, and that I had doubted of the affection that he had offered me.

His answer was full of passion and gratitude: he slipped it quietly into my hand after a long walk, taken, like those of the past, at ten paces from each other.

The beautiful month of May arrived: we went sometimes to the service of the Virgin, with my aunt, *he* also went to join his prayers to mine! We daily met each other in the garden of the Tuileries. Twice the admirable music of Duprez made our hearts beat with the same emotions; little notes hidden in a flower or exchanged in the street prepared these rendezvous for our eyes. Sometimes also I opened the window, and sang to him those airs I could sing the best. The whole month passed thus . . . . then came the departure for Villers-Hellon.

It was impossible for me to receive letters there, and he was going to travel. His looks swore that he would love me for ever; mine promised never to forget him. I do not know whether he was very unhappy; but I was not very sad, for I had not felt much love for him except during those days when I thought that he had forgotten me, and that he loved me no more! . . . .

I had scarcely been two days at Villers-Hellon, when an unfortunate incident discovered this imprudent and ridiculous intrigue to my aunt Garat. Never, oh! never, shall I forget her indignation, the words with which she humiliated

me! She would know all, and did not give me time to answer her. On the appearance of the letter, she became more enraged than ever, and said "That I was lost, dishonoured; that I would be denied by family and friends; that this man would show my letters; that he would despise me after having bestowed on me the mere semblance of love; that he would blush to call me his wife, and would never marry a young girl so imprudent as to have written to a young man who was unknown to her family, and with whom she had never even exchanged one word! He wished to speculate upon possibilities;" she added, "he believes you to be a rich heiress, and now all your fortune would not suffice to purchase his silence!" . . . .

Was it possible! I was twenty-one years of age, and I had already lost all hope! all honour!

"My God! aunt," I exclaimed, sobbing; "save, for pity's sake, save me!" But she left my chamber without listening to me, and locked me in.

I was driven to desperation; my head felt as if it were on fire! Those words of scorn, of dishonour, distracted it. I told my good Lalo that I should lose my senses, that I wished to die. My grandfather was gone out; she had in vain entreated my aunt to be kind to me; and the poor girl, not knowing any other way of quieting me, suggested the idea of my writing to this gentleman, who could not be so wicked as to injure a poor girl that had never done anything to wrong him. I accordingly wrote a letter, despairing, supplicating; and Lalo sent one of her nephews five leagues in order to put it secretly into the post at Soissons.

I did not despair so much when my grandfather returned; I threw myself, all in tears, upon his neck! I could not speak. Lalo endeavoured to tell him the cause of all my grief.

"Come, come! weep no more," said he, embracing me, "your aunt had cause to scold you, but not to torture you thus. Be calm, my child; you are not dishonoured; you shall see happy days yet, and a husband. Come, smile on me, and let *me* read you a lecture upon the imprudence you have been guilty of in writing these foolish little notes. In the first place, I will tell you it is wrong; next, that it is stupid; and that, if your reputation is not endangered, your prudence and your disposition will be so exceedingly. I

promise you that the consequences of this folly will be easily averted; so, kiss me, and do not wet my cheeks with your tears any longer . . . Be calm, be calm. I am going to look for your aunt; I will arrange everything . . . . . You know how much I love you, my dear little criminal!"

In two hours, my aunt Garat, provided with my notes, was on her road to Paris; in two days she returned, and called together a little family council, before which it was requisite that I should appear. My aunt told me that she had seen *my hero;* that he was an apothecary, had an income of six hundred francs per annum, that his father was an apothecary and druggist, and would establish him in business. She told me that my hero offered me his heart and his hand; and that I should reign over his rhubarb and senna before the end of summer.

I was confounded: I dared not raise my eyes. I dared not speak, I dared not weep.

"This marriage is contrary to my wishes," added my aunt; "you might have remained among us, happy, honoured, beloved . . . . But let us speak of that no more . . . . love knows no obstacles; one is always happy with the heart of one's choice . . . ."

This was not all; my letters were then read in a loud and intelligible voice, and being thus read with lawyer-like coolness, they had an inexpressible air of ridicule and folly; then, after this torture, liberty was granted me that I might in solitude indulge in my own reflections; they were horribly sad, painful, and humiliating! M. de Pourceaugnac, le Malade Imaginaire, threatening phantoms, rose up around me. I would have married without hesitation a well-informed countryman, an honest working man; but to marry a druggist, and without love! it was enough to drive one to despair.

Fortunately my grandfather came to me secretly to shorten my agony. He assured me that this marriage was merely a fable to give me a lesson for my imprudence; that it had been easy enough to repair my folly, and that the *young hero*, when he understood that I was an orphan, and not an heiress, had very willingly renounced *his* eternal love.

CHAPTER XXVI.

My emotions were too sad and too deep for me to undergo without sinking under them. The very evening on which these painfully ridiculous scenes were acted, I remained for six hours without sensation. I had two attacks of fever, which made me shiver twice as if under the icy air of night, and I came to life with a nervous affection as painful as violent. The spasms caused me to pass all my nights without sleep, and produced in me a vague sadness, feverish, insurmountable during the crisis.

My aunt Garat became particularly kind to me; her words had never before been so soft, so affectionate. She avoided the remembrances of my last torments with a considerate feeling; she planned for me pleasures and amusements; she even frequently made me sleep in her own chamber, to cheer my sad and tedious nights at the expense of her own rest.

To all these agitations succeeded the parties and enjoyments of the winter; to all the foolish dreams of my imagination succeeded calm, serious, and melancholy reveries. An affectionate word, a kiss from my aunt or my grandfather, caused me to experience a gentle emotion which brought tears into my eyes; sometimes music made me happy; at other times it affected me beyond expression. The colour fled from my cheeks; I was changed; they became uneasy about my health. However, I did not suffer much . . . . I had merely a weakness of body and of mind, which was as a half sleep, as a half existence. It required commands to make me leave my couch, to extract a word from me. I had not a smile but for my grandfather, and I did not feel that I lived except in the consciousness of loving him.

I passed nearly three months in this state, and during that time the most tender care, the most anxious attentions were lavished on me by my family, my friends, and by our good peasants. The finest fruits and the most beautiful flowers were reserved for me, and the young village girls disputed with my nurse Lalo the right of participating in tending me by night.

M. le Comte Ch—— came to make his annual visit only. At the time I was still very ill; I passed my days reclining upon a couch, under the shade of the great lime trees, on the grass. He approached me, and seemed sadly shocked at the change; he informed himself of my sufferings with the most affectionate solicitude; he had arranged to stay with us but one hour, but he remained the entire day; was anxious, attentive, and on his departure, spoke of returning, and begged permission to send to make inquiries as to my health.

"This visit that you announce to us—are we to reckon it in the place of the next year's?" said my grandfather, smiling.

"I no longer reckon," replied he, seriously, and turning towards me.

In short, not a fortnight elapsed without bringing back M. Ch—— to Villers-Hellon. He always came when we were alone; occupied himself particularly with me; sought for subjects of conversation which seemed particularly to interest me; brought me books, reviews, and poems; at last he knew so well how to engage my attention, that he was permitted to remain by my couch or by my arm-chair, to preserve me from a ray of sun or from too keen an air, from a melancholy thought or from too painful an emotion.

When autumn brought back the holidays and the accompanying pleasures, when we had fêtes and numerous *reunions*, and my health was improved, our new friend came but seldom; he took to his accustomed habits of sadness, recklessness, and abstraction, increased by a remarkable desire to avoid me. I was grieved at this change in him, and anxious to know the cause.

"Have I involuntarily offended you?" I asked him one evening. "Is it necessary that I should be ill to be thought deserving of your attention?"

"But you have no longer any need of me. Are you not surrounded by friends?"

"That may be; but you were willing to amuse me when I was suffering; I wished to do the same for you when you appear to be unhappy. You refuse—we are quits; let us mention it no more."

"Oh! listen to me!" said he. "I esteem you with all my heart; your friendship, your confidence, your advice, will be invaluable. But I fear for the calumnies of the world, which I brave so willingly myself; I fear that my friendship, instead of honouring you, should expose you to idle and ridiculous remarks. My reputation is very bad; I fear——"

"Could you not somewhat change your mode of life?"

"Do you then know the story of my life?"

"Yes; I know you have friends who destroy you; speculations which ruin you; and principles, which, while everybody else repeats them to himself in whispers, you declare aloud."

"What next?"

"What next! Is not that enough?"

"There is more than that, Mademoiselle; I have at home a wife who is not my wife, a woman who has abandoned her husband to follow me."

"Poor fallen creature, how I pity her!"

"Rather pity me! She is happy, and I am wretched!"

"That is to say, then, she is to be despised, and you are weak."

"Are you willing to convert me, to save me, to be a *friend* to me?"

"I will. I will be a very severe friend (*un ami très sévère et sans* c); and I will acquaint one of my aunts of it, that she may comprehend our design, and permit us to talk together sometimes."

"Thank you! thank you! but is this resolve sincere and sacred; is it to endure?"

"For ever," said I, extending my hand to him.

This conversation made a deep impression upon me. I had found M. Ch—— noble and confiding; I was sweetly proud to lead him back to the duties of life. So, in the morning, I spoke to my aunts thereupon.

They listened to me attentively, whispered together a little at first, then told me, that they permitted me at pre-

sent a friendship, which, six months previously, they would have considered dangerous, and that they required of me entire confidence for M. Ch——; only not to conceal from them any actions or any words of M. Ch—— which related to myself.

From this period M. Ch—— visited us often. He chose those days on which we were alone, occupied himself exclusively with me, who soon became the confident of all his troubles and all his affairs. He had engaged in immense speculations. He was surrounded by young men, who ruined him to enrich themselves, praised him to deceive him, played upon his vanity to destroy him.

It was often necessary to raise his courage, overthrown by their injustice and cruel deceptions; and it was more often necessary to combat his chimerical hopes and destroy his illusions. This man, whom society had discarded, whose every word was sceptical, all of whose visible actions violated established usage, who laughed at virtue and devotion, who scoffed at life and at death;—this man was noble, devoted, generous, concealed his merits, confided only to me;—this man, in fact, was happy and proud when I said to him, "I am content—'tis well."

In October, I saw for an hour or two Mille. de Nicolaï, who came to pass two days with Madame de Montbreton. She did not mention a word respecting M. Clavé, but her second word to me was to request me to write to the mistress of the post-office of Villers-Coterets, to send *me* a letter which she expected, and wished to conceal from her sister. It was impossible for me to comply with her request. However, far from being grieved at my refusal, she was, as formerly, friendly and communicative, and revealed to me her present passion. This year, it was at a ball that she had turned the head of a poor youth, who had managed to get an introduction to her mother, and afterwards an invitation to Busagny, where he had passed some days, Marie did not love him then, but carried away by the ardour of the love he expressed for her—carried away by the indolent and monotonous solitude of the country, she received some letters, and granted him some secret interviews in the park; and at length made him so far believe that the affection was mutual, that he threatened to exile himself for ever, or to

blow out his brains, if she would not consent to be his bride. Mlle. de Nicolaï was at a loss to know how to preserve herself from this mortally passionate love, and seemed very repugnant to a marriage which secured none of the conventional requisites of such a bargain.

M. de Léautaud possessed a small title, a revenue of some debts, no position, and character ditto. I confess that I occupied myself but little with this new intrigue. Marie had so easily cast off and forgotten M. Clavé, that I was well assured as to the termination of this second imprudence, and fully resolved to take no part in it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Our last five days of the season were passed wearily among a knot of advocates and notaries, &c. &c. For many years past, my grandfather had neglected his affairs, his fine revenue, given up to neglect and disorder, was no longer sufficient for him; he had incurred debts, and it was indispensable to *check* them; it was very difficult to effect this desirable object. My aunts, who only spent a portion of the year at Villers-Hellon, had time to detect all the vices of his home department, and the errors of his administration, but not to commence any serious reform; my new little aunt could not occupy herself with it, having no influence with my grandfather, and my uncle wanted firmness and perseverance in the execution of his economical ideas.

After an awful reckoning up of debts; after a thousand projects more or less impossible, my grandfather offered to put me at the head of his affairs, to let me have the management of his income, and, in one word, to make me the head mistress of his dear Villers-Hellon. My aunts were happy, and re-assured by this arrangement; and to obliterate Paris from the tablet of my mind, they exaggerated the service I should render them, wishing to flatter my self-love and my pride.

But I had no need of consolation. The possibility of being necessary to the happiness of my grandfather, of benefiting the condition of all my friends, the liberty and the independence which I now enjoyed, left me no room for regret. I had a lady's maid, an allowance for dress, and my grandfather presented me to all of his friends as his better-half.

On the first of November, which bestowed on me my full powers, all our old servants were assembled in the drawing-room; there, with tears of emotion and joy, they promised to obey me; to respect me as much as they had loved me; to assist me to remedy old abuses; they promised to give up to me their ancient independence, and not to murmur, for the love of the little girl whom as an infant they had danced in their arms. Good and faithful servants! in one week all the habits of disorder and license of these little subordinate tyrants of the kitchen, the stables, and the garden, were subdued. There was no discontent—not a murmur. If I saw a slight cloud on the face of my nurse Mie, who, after having enjoyed a disorderly reign of thirty years, was astonished, to find her doings criticised by the little girl from whom she used to shut up her cakes and jellies, I embraced her, and her face brightened. If Durand our cook was too careless and independent, I appealed to his self-esteem, and managed him. In short, I had in succession reproof, praises, and encouragement for all, and thus prevented not only any bad acts, but also even signs of ill-temper.

My grandfather was amused at seeing me thus play the lady; and with perfect good humour yielded to all my wishes, my economy, and my tyranny. He had reserved a sufficient sum for his pleasure, or rather for the pleasure and the wants of others. Well, I perpetrated sundry affectionate little rogueries, in order to obtain the right of dispensing this for him according to my wishes. Each of us had our especial pensioners. The young girls were his favourites, the good old people mine. He gave away fine gowns, I gave soup and wine; he made them dance, I filled their snuff-boxes; he diffused joy, I removed pain. In truth, my grandfather protected those whose birth he had witnessed, and I consoled those who had bent round my cradle.

When I was blessed for the benefits which I diffused for my grandfather, I wished earnestly for the time when it would be permitted me to merit for myself this affecting gratitude. And when sometimes I could console in my own name, and give something which belonged to me, I hoarded with delight the little treasure of benedictions which belonged to myself alone.

On learning that I was elevated to the dignity of mistress of the house, and that I should pass the winter at Villers-Hellon, M. Ch—— appeared greatly pleased. He could but rarely come to see me, his affairs requiring his presence; but if he had griefs, if he had hopes to impart, he would find an hour to share them with me; or, if restrained too imperiously, he would send his favourite servant to learn the news, to talk to my good Ursula about my health, and he would send me books and flowers.

M. Ch—— had fixed the end of October 1838, for the opening of his railroad. He intended to give a grand fête; and reserved for me the honour of being queen of the ball, of the fire-works, and of being the first carried on his first carriage.

"Then," said he, "I shall ask you for my conduct the advice you give me for my affairs. I shall become good, worthy to openly avow myself your *friend*, your *pupil*. Then—"

"Hold your tongue," I replied gently. "Think but of the innumerable difficulties which remain to conquer. Consecrate to them all your time, all your thoughts, and do not dream until you have touched the goal. We must habituate ourselves to the idea of misfortune in order to bear it nobly; on the contrary, happiness soon teaches itself; we want no reflection to accept it, but shed bitter tears to lose it.

Never were any of the graceful and amiable commonplaces of the world exchanged between me and M. Ch——. During his visits, which were rare, and always reserved for the evening, we were confiding friends; we were occupied much with ourselves, and very little with those who surrounded us; and my aunt Blanche, with a perfect good nature, would take a book, and be as deaf and dumb as we could desire. If any stranger arrived, whose eyes and ears were open, I sat down to the piano, and played some very bril-

liant and very noisy variations, and managed thus completely to isolate our conversation. In these intimate exchanges of thought, we spoke of his business, his vexations, and mistakes. I was indignant with him, scolded him, and consoled him. He was happy when I let him dream aloud of his successes, but if I spoke for myself of a future more distant than the morrow, he would say—

"In mercy, think not of the future. Do not dispose of it; be every day the providence of your grandfather; be the joy and comfort of your friends . . . . then wait, I entreat you, ... wait!" I dared not translate these words to myself, nevertheless I dreamed of them for many hours; they helped me to forget that woman whom he loved, his rare visits, his singular character; they suffered my thoughts to wander in a vague infinity of hopes and fears. Those of my days which M. Ch—— came not across, were still calm and peaceful. I read and walked with my aunt Blanche; I had her little Valentine to worship, at least an hour every day; and besides, my aunts wrote to me from Paris long and kind letters to cheer my solitude.

When any of the subjects in my little kingdom revolted, when any abuses called for wise and prudent laws, I went to pass a week with the Comtesse Dulauloy, a friend of my father's, who lived in a beautiful château on the banks of the Aisne. Madame Dulauloy had been so exceedingly beautiful at twenty, that she was still so at sixty. All in her and about her bore the stamp of elegant simplicity, order, and refinement; her gardens, her house, her dinners, and her servants, had a reputation for indisputable and undisputed perfection.

Madame Dulauloy, who was perfectly kind to me, initiated me to all the mysteries of her *model administration;* promised to draw up a code of laws for Villers-Hellon, and engaged to come to my assistance whenever I should be impeded or perplexed in carrying it into execution. This was not all; when she had improved my education, as mistress of the house, this dear friend of my father bestowed some thought on my pleasures. She quitted her solitude to escort me to the balls at Soissons; corrected and anticipated the fashions, in order to compose for me a delightful toilette; and enjoyed my success with an indulgent kindness which

will never be effaced from my memory. During the Carnival, in order to amuse and occupy my grandfather, I thought of giving some *soirées dansantes* to the inhabitants of the village. All the young men, all the girls, assembled in the dining-room on Sunday evening, where two violins played in unison pretty quadrilles; there were besides, cakes and other refieshments; and until midnight the gaiety and the pleasure of others delighted my grandfather, and he was quite happy when I danced, when I had made myself very handsome, and his peasants admired me.

On Shrove Tuesday, I wished to add to these pleasures, the surprise of a little masked ball, and our neighbours kindly lent themselves to my wishes, and accepted my invitations. My grandfather, with an admirable kindness, consented to go back to the time when he was an infidel of the Directory; my uncle Maurice was a noble Styrian; M. Elmore an unexceptionable Grand Turk; and M. Ch—— had caused to be made at Paris a splendid costume of the time of Louis XIII. We had a pantaloon, a Figaro; in short, we excited the wonder and admiration of the guests of our village. At one o'clock in the morning the party ended with a good supper. Never was I at a more pleasant fête; I danced eight times with M. Ch——; he thought my Tyrolese dress charming, and praised it a thousand times this happy night.

In March, my aunt Blanche had the honour of presenting my grandfather with his first grandson. He had eight grand-daughters, and had been so long tired of the feminine monotony of all his generation, that I quite envied my aunt, who at last realized for him his wishes of thirty-five years—his hopes almost despairing. Contrary to all my expectations, my grandfather received this news but coldly.

"What!" cried I, "you are not happy, not proud of the boy that you have so ardently desired!"

"No, my child, death is very near, and I have no time to create in myself a new affection. My treasure is large enough, and I have no desire to increase it, that I may retain strength enough to die."

Perceiving that he had made me sad with his though sorrow and parting, he added—

"Do not afflict thyself at what I say; thy cares, thy ten-

derness will lengthen my life ten years, and for thy sake I will keep a place in my heart for *our* little Jacques."

This kind thought, which made me blush, but filled me with pride, was repaid with kisses. It seemed, that my grandfather had divined that I was jealous of the happiness which he did not owe to me.

The grand relations of the family of Montaigu were sent for, to give to the pretty little boy his name and his qualification of Christian; but as they could not quit Paris to baptize the little marmot, my uncle begged M. Ch—— to represent his father-in-law, and I had the honour of representing the godmother.

This was one of my bright days. In the morning I received a box of bonbons with sashes, gloves, flowers, and ribbons. Everything was white, everything was perfumed; an affectionate care had presided over this present. Later in the day M. Ch—— arrived. I wished to thank him, but he seemed already so happy that I dared not express all my gratitude to him.

"Do you know the necessary forms for this ceremony?" said my aunt, laughing, to him.

"Not at all," replied the godfather.

Then, turning to me, he asked me to assist him, and to teach him *his prayers*. I sat down on a couch in the drawing-room; he seated himself on a low chair just at my feet, took my large mass-book, and the lesson commenced. I said the prayers over to him, and he repeated them after me.

When we came to the salutation of the angel, he took a long time to learn it, a long time to repeat it; and as we finished he opened the book at the mass of marriage, and tore out the two leaves, as he said:

"You will not be able to read that again without me."

The firing of guns, vivats, and a great crowd accompanied us to the church; on entering it, leaning on his arm, I was much affected; an old woman exclaiming:

"Don't they look nice? They are just like a new married couple!"

Upon which he pressed my arm, and whispered:

"Marie, in a year!"

I had begged my aunt not to invite a parcel of tiresome people, but to let the peasants only dance in honour of her

son. So we were quite alone, *en famille*, with M. Elmore, who was reckoned too much as a friend to count for anybody.

We danced in the dining-room, but it was cold, and the blazing wood fire in the large chimney of the saloon enticed us there between the dances. Twice M. Ch—— found himself there alone with me. The last time, I had rested one of my arms on the large chimney-piece while I was conversing with him; suddenly he seized my arm crying out:

"Imprudent creature! you are burning! thus it is you die."

"A tomb at twenty with flowers, tears, and prayers! do you think that so fearful?"

"You would wish to die; you! and without having been beloved?"

"It is so difficult to be so, truly, in this world."

"You are so, Marie;—I love you. Yes, I love you with all the power of my soul."

He took my hand, carried it to his lips; he looked at me without speaking; and I was motionless, trembling—M. Elmore entered.

"I accept," I replied, in a low voice to his look.

"In a year?"

"Yes, in a year."

After this day nothing was changed but our hearts; he came not oftener, he stayed not longer. As before, we talked of his affairs, his troubles, his hopes, his deceptions. He only stopped sometimes to say "In a year!" He only pronounced my name in accents of affection, of devotion; he only pressed my hand on his coming, and kissed it with respect when we parted.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the spring I went to pass a few days in Paris with my aunt Martens, who wished to learn the results of my "administration," and who wished also, before she set out for Baden, to be made the confidante of all our secrets, and give me her good counsel. I told my aunt of the noble and candid affection which M. Ch—— expressed for me. She was affected by my recital, and gave me her permission to love him almost as my betrothed. How happy did it make me! It would have been impossible for me to obey her if she had said, "Think of him no more!"

Since I had last seen my old friend Mlle. de Nicolaï, a great change had taken place in her existence. In January, she had become Viscountess de Léautaud, and the particulars of her marriage, which were given me by M. de Montbreton, astonished me as much as they did the rest of her acquaintances.

He told me that M. de Léautaud had come one fine morning to pay a visit to M. de Nicolaï, that he remained with him all the day, then all the evening; and that on the following day it was officially announced, that in a fortnight he would be the happy husband of Mlle. de Nicolaï.

How! said one, Mlle. Nicolaï, so proud, so difficult to please, to refuse the most advantageous offers, and marry the little Léautaud. Well! that is an enigma.—What! said another, Mlle. de Nicolaï, who so much loves pleasure, dress, riches, to marry so many thousand francs of income, which are doubtless so many thousand francs of debt. Yes; it *is* a problem. At all events, she marries in mid-winter, that she may the more freely enter into society?—Not at all; M. de Léautaud is in deep mourning for his mother; M. de Léautaud cannot dance the whole season.—Then it is a love match, and she must be happy indeed?—Still further from

the truth; she has the air of a victim, who marries incognito at seven in the morning; laughs no more—talks no more.—Incredible, surprising, wonderful! was the universal chorus.

A little note had apprised Marie of my arrival in Paris. She came to see me at my aunt's. I found her altered, serious, but more tender, and more friendly than ever. I then saw her wonderful husband. He was a young man, a little less desirable than many others, and that was all.

Two days before I left Villers-Hellon, I had received a letter from M. Clavé, which renewed our former acquaintance. He wrote to me from Algiers, to reclaim from me some little of the affectionate interest I had formerly lavished on him. He assured me that he had religiously preserved my remembrance in the depths of his heart; and asked me, with a bitter expression of irony, for news of Marie and her marriage. I showed to Madame Léautaud this letter, which I had brought with me. She appeared troubled, agitated, and entreated me not to answer it: "For," said she, "M. Clavé is not an African colonist, but a figurant at the Opera." She had seen him there, and his name was on the list; Mlle. Delvaux was also convinced of it. I pointed out to Madame de Léautaud that the letter bore the post-mark of Africa.

"That is to deceive you, and ruin me. But I desire, I exact of you, that you will not answer it."

I promised her this very willingly. Pleasingly isolated in my remembrance of the past, and in my hopes of the morrow, I had scarcely time to bestow on the indifferent.

The time that I spent in Paris seemed to me an age, and I was very happy when I found myself once more at Villers-Hellon, where I might hope for—expect him.

The affairs of M. Ch—— became more involved, and the consummation of all our wishes appeared to be flying before obstacles almost invincible. He could not dispose of a few hours without losing valuable time, neglecting his occupations, and creating new delays: so that on meeting each other, we regretted the days of happiness which time was stealing from our bright futurity.

Seeing that he was unwell, very unhappy, almost in despair, I seldom allowed him to travel the three leagues that separated us; and we agreed to meet each other when I rode out on horseback in company with M. Elmore. Our

place of meeting was one of those beautiful open spaces in the forest of Villers-Coteret, in which its majestic avenues terminate; sombre arcades of green trees, under which the soul is entirely given up to its Creator, the heart to its friend. When I saw M. Ch—— as yet far off, I allowed the rein to fall on the neck of Eyram, leaned forward, gave a low cry of impatience, and the nimble courser, who seemed to understand me, darted through the air, and carried me swift as an arrow towards the dear expected one.

When we met, out of breath from the rapidity of our course, we could not speak, but we smiled; we looked an interchange of thought, and our hands pressed each other in token of welcome. After having thanked M. Elmore, who presently joined us, we chose little, wild, and rugged paths, in which it was impossible for three to ride abreast. Our worthy friend generally allowed us to precede him, and performed his part of guardian, near enough to see us, but without being able to hear what we said; I often turned towards him to give him a word, a look of thanks, to make him forget the minutes which we so willingly would have changed into hours.

M. Ch——, with whom Diana Vernon, my pretty Scottish heroine, was also an especial favourite, pretended that he had found her likeness in me. He was proud to see me brave the dangers by his side; proud of seeing me brave the scandal of the world, that I might give him my advice, my encouragement, my affectionate attachment.

"Dear Diana Marie," he would often say to me, "you are above prejudices; you despise them, you trample on them, without difficulty. Oh! how I bless you for it, how I honour you for your courage above all women."

"You deceive yourself and flatter me, if you believe me indifferent to censure. I fear it, I suffer from it, but I do not yield to it except when it comes from my own heart. I would neither sacrifice to you my conscience, nor a single duty, but I could brave all the laws of the world to please you."

The affairs of M. Ch—— coming incessantly to usurp the chief place in all our conversations, he sought in vain to conceal the truth from me; I saw that he suffered, that he struggled, that he gave way before enemies, more and more elevated, excited, attracted, by the allurements of his for-

tune. I was not alarmed at seeing him slightly ruined, but then I understood the value of riches, and I could have desired millions, that I might bestow them upon him.

After each of these brief interviews, we exchanged our word of consolation and strength: "In a year!" We exchanged adieus, a flower! Then I left him at a walk, and he stopped his horse, and followed me with his eyes until a turn of the road prevented our seeing each other any longer.

When M. Ch—— was obliged to go to Paris, he wrote to me by M. Elmore, and I answered him with a few words in the same way. Our letters were simple—serious as our affection. We were happy, without mystery and without fears.

This feeling, which had taken possession of my existence, did not absorb it, but filled it. Far from forgetting my duties in thinking of him, I fulfilled them more strictly, that I might render myself worthy of his love. From the time I began to love him, I prayed more frequently to God. I repeated my prayers, evening and morning, once in his name and once in my own. I made him the partner of my good deeds, that he might partake in the blessings which they brought me: finally, when we were quite separate, I still lived entirely in him and for him.

My good grandfather did not much approve of M. Ch——. He did not understand love so deep, so serious, as his was; he feared the deranged state of his affairs; above all, he was jealous, on my account, of that woman whom he kept at the head of his household.

I did not participate in this feeling of jealousy. Once only had M. Ch—— spoken to me of this woman; he told me that he had made her, in case of a separation, exorbitant promises; that it would be difficult for him to realize them at the critical moment, but that, if I could not endure her presence at O——, he would remove her, and that the impossible would become possible to him, in order to prevent me a disagreeable reflection.

"Forgive me, if I am proud enough not to be jealous," I said to him, as I gave him my hand: "I will not accept a love such as that which has drawn you towards her: I possess those of your thoughts which are noble and generous; I have all your confidence, all your esteem, your whole soul.—What have I to envy her?"

CHAPTER XXIX.

The beautiful months of flowers and the harvest thus flowed along, without producing in my heaven other clouds than those which obscured the sky of M. Ch——.

My aunts had gone to spend the summer at a watering-place; and, left alone with my aunt Blanche, I performed the honours of Villers-Hellon to my friends, who admired and congratulated me on the economy I had introduced. Every one had divined the very happy and very fixed idea of my soul; Madame de Montesquiou was alone disturbed at it; and she, while all around were smiling, prepared me for bitter tears.

At the end of August my grandfather was unable to leave his chamber, owing to a violent attack of rheumatism, which soon confined him to his bed; and in two days after congestion of the brain declared itself.

None of his daughters were near him. My uncle and aunt dared not prescribe any remedy, and eight hours elapsed before a doctor could be procured. What hours! With my eyes fixed upon the pendulum, I counted every second. Our dear sufferer was no longer able to speak; but he informed me by signs, that he recognised me; that he was no longer in pain, and I suppressed my emotion, in order to catch a smile from those eyes which were rivetted on me. At last, the doctor arrived; but, alas! he gave us no hope.

In those fearful moments, my noble grandfather was as calm and untroubled as his conscience. I was seated, by his desire, at the foot of his bed, so that he might see me; and when, from time to time, I went to give him some medicine, I kissed his gray hair, and bent my head under his hands to receive his blessing.

Towards midnight an expression of joy escaped from me, —he called me towards him:—

"My child!" he uttered in a low voice, "do not leave me; I am going to sleep—let me rest my head on you."

"God be praised! then you are better!"

"Yes; but let me sleep."

I made a sign to Lalo for her to inform my uncle of this happy change, and I sent for the doctor that he might assure us of his recovery. Then I knelt down upon the bed, placed his head on my knees, and bent over him with a feeling of adoration.

Suddenly, I felt his hand press mine; then that burning hand became cool, cold, freezing under my lips, which strove to warm it. I felt that terrible impression which I had experienced at the death of my mother: I shrieked! His soul was no longer with us.

I adored my grandfather. The tears which I had thrust back into my heart, to spare him their sight in his last moments—that hidden grief—that repressed anguish, now caused me a fearful nervous crisis. I remained motionless, speechless, thoughtless, until the day on which my aunt Garat, arriving in despair, restored to me the faculties of suffering and weeping, that I might suffer and weep with her. The tomb, which had just opened to rob me of my last support, had opened again two other tombs in my heart. I seemed to have lost in one day my father, my mother, my grandfather.

M. Ch—— came to weep over me, and over him; I remembered that he had need of my life, and I began again to live. My aunt Garat wished to remove me from Villers-Hellon, which to me had become the scene of many painful associations; but before my departure, I had decided on having a positive explanation with M. Ch——. It was on a Tuesday that, for the first time since our misfortune, I descended to the saloon to receive M. Ch——. Each article of furniture awakened in my mind some sad reminiscence. At last he arrived, more tender and affectionate than ever. And yet, in our conversation, he carefully avoided all allusion to the future, and gave me to understand that he had some recent sorrow weighing heavily on his mind. Whenever I spoke of my departure, he turned pale, trembled, and soon changed the subject of conversation: my situation was becoming insupportable. At length, he said:—

"I wish to speak with you alone."

I replied that it was also my desire; and, turning to my aunts who were beside us, I desired them to leave me alone with him for a quarter of an hour. They consented, and retired.

A few long moments elapsed in silence; our eyes shunned each other like our thoughts; suddenly he took my hand, I burst into tears, and said to him:—

"Charles, I am now alone in the world. Will you protect me?"

"Oh, I love you: I will always love you," he replied.

"Do you approve of my going to Paris?"

"How can I, when it will separate us? Why not remain at Villers-Hellon with M. Collard?"

"My aunt is a mother to me. I must follow and obey her, until I shall *have to obey*——"

I durst not conclude my sentence. He did not reply. Silence for several minutes again ensued. I exerted all my energy to break it.

"I believe you love me," I said precipitately. "I know that I love you! We are affianced by mutual affection; but tell me, Charles, in the name of our fathers who are in heaven, am I the wife whom you have chosen?"

"Alas! I have chosen you from among all;—but my affairs, my fortune!——"

"Hear me! When you were rich and I was poor, I loved you enough to forget that distinction. I now claim my right. Would it make you unhappy, Charles, to be beloved?"

"Can I drag you into utter ruin? Alone, I can support it; but I could not bear to see you sharing my privations. But I will rebuild my fortunes. Then——"

"Then, fortunate or not, will you choose me——?"

"How can I make you such a promise? How can I bind your young life to my regrets and my deceptions?"

"It is enough, sir; I understand you. May God pardon you! you have most cruelly deceived me."

"Marie, for mercy's sake, believe me! If I refuse my happiness——"

He threw himself on his knees, and covered with his kisses my hands, with which I would have hid my face; I felt his lips touch my cheek as he kissed away a tear.

"What!" cried I; "you would obtain from me now that which you should not obtain even were I about to become your wife. Your conduct is base indeed, sir; it is cowardly in the extreme."

I arose, and rang violently for a servant, whom I ordered to light M. Ch——, as he wished to retire, to his chamber; then, when the door was closed, I could have wished to die. I passed the whole of the night on my knees, with my head resting on the hands of my poor Antonine, who, like myself, was overwhelmed with sorrow and despair.

Towards the morning I heard the sound of a horse's foot. It was his. In passing under my windows his eyes sought me, but they met not mine, which followed him notwithstanding. He turned his head thrice, and thrice I stood in need of all my courage to withstand the promptings of my heart. At last he urged his horse into a gallop, and I saw him no more—I have never seen him since!

CHAPTER XXX.

I REMAINED for a long time very unhappy, but without despair, without tears. I had been wrecked against friendship, love, against all that I had admired, dreamed of, desired in this life. The awakening was cruel. I entered into the world of reality discouraged, indifferent; resolved to do as others did; to suffer the common lot; to think with the rest of mankind; to comprehend in the happinesses of existence for the future nothing but that of doing good, and satisfying myself with the pleasures of others.

I knew that the avowed affection of M. Ch—— had drawn upon me the censure of those charitable persons who seem to create virtues in themselves by exposing faults in others. It neither astonished nor depressed me. In learning the fragility of all worldly things, I was also made acquainted with the all-powerful and firm happiness of a good conscience.

My cousin Garat was married, in the month of October, to M. Sabatié, who was a suitable husband, and one very easy to love. I remained alone with my aunt, who treated me with the greatest affection, and I obtained from her permission to pay all my own expenses. Lalo, my faithful servant, was also with me—she who had for forty years loved, served, and nursed, with a devoted attachment, my poor grandfather, his children, and his grand-children. I was independent enough, and sufficiently miserable.

My aunt went much into society; I sought it rarely. My studies and private occupations were for the time forgotten, and I spent my hours in speaking of my grandfather to Lalo. We wept, I consoled her, and in turn she consoled me. To divert my thoughts, I went occasionally to my aunt De Martens, to Madame Montbreton, to Madame Léautaud. I took lessons in singing of Madame Lina Frappa, who sang

deliciously, and whose heart and good disposition I preferred even to her sweet voice.

This winter I saw again M. Felix de Violaine, who came sometimes to my aunt De Martens. He loved me for two days; took a somewhat serious fancy for my sisier; was beloved and accepted by her, and became my brother-in-law in the month of December. M. de Violaine, without exaggeration, was a frank and upright man, with an excellent heart, an agreeable exterior, and a good place in the forests of the crown.

The happiness of Antonine was somewhat reflected on my life. I spent several days at her house at Dourdan; and the love that she bore for Felix, and the love that he returned to her, added to the warmth of affection with which they treated me, awakened youthful thoughts in my sad memory. Unfortunately I was driven from Dourdan by a severe inflammation in the stomach, which took me back to M. Marjolin and Paris, suffering very disagreeably. Incessantly retained in my arm-chair, my only mundane pleasures were the theatres. I went to the Theatre Français, and had the good fortune to see Mlle. Rachel in Iphigénie and Mithridate. I had often before applauded with enthusiasm the great *artistes* of the Opera and the Bouffes; but what I felt on seeing this young girl was more than admiration, it was a deep sentiment of the most affectionate sympathy. Her voice caused my heart to vibrate; my thoughts were ennobled and elevated. Her chaste and penetrating looks smiled to my looks, and I could have wished that she could read in my eyes the enthusiasm and respect with which she inspired me.

My inflammation, my melancholy, and my majority having given me greater independence, and my singing lessons taking me twice a-week to the Rue d'Aguesseau, I often called on Madame Léautaud.

My misfortunes, in leaving a void in my heart, had created a desire in me to revive all my old friendships; and Marie, sad, and suffering like myself, resumed by degrees her place in my affections. She knew that I had loved, that I had been beloved, and that I was no longer so. I knew that she was not happy. We understood each other now; and we

often sat for hours suffering together, exchanging looks of sorrow, but without exchanging a single word.

Madame Léautaud was especially subject to sad and long abstractions, of which our hero, our poet, M. Clavé, was the cause; innocent in my opinion, very despicable in hers. According to her belief, M. Clavé was a *figurant;* he had only written to me as from Algiers to lay a snare for us, to collect again all the threads of our intrigue, to unfold it to the world, and thus to attach to his name a scandalous renown. In vain did I state that I had never seen M. Clavé on the boards, or on the list of the Opera. In vain did I endeavour to convince her that her suspicions were an insult to him, or a chimerical torture for herself.

She assured me that she had met him in the street, at the theatre; and that it was necessary for her honour and peace that he should be removed from her.

Not sharing in these opinions, I tried to combat them, or to prevent her thinking of them. Several times I wished to retract my promise given in the spring; to reply to M. Clavé's letter, and thus to know if he were really in the deserts of Africa or behind the scenes of the Opera; but she always conjured me not to commit a new imprudence, and I ceded to her wishes.

After having given birth to a child, Marie became healthy and happy in appearance; but her sadness, her melancholy infatuation as to M. Clavé, acted so seriously upon her already enfeebled health, that she was at length obliged to quit Paris, to go in search of peace and quietness at Busagny.

Before her departure she made me promise that I would spend some days with her. One letter, two letters, three letters came successively, urging me to fulfil my promise. I spoke to my aunt Garat about the invitation which I had received from Mlle. Nicolaï, but she persuaded me not to accept it. But Madame de Martens, to whom M. Marjolin had recommended the country for the benefit of my health, urged her sister to consent, and my journey to Busagny was fixed for the first days of June.

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was six in the morning when, with the aged Lalo, I took my place in the lumbering vehicle that was to restore me to the sun's bright face and the pleasant fields. Like a true Parisienne, I know nothing of Paris, and still less of its environs; so that, after having passed beneath the Arc de Triomphe de l'Etoile, all was new to me. Continually looking through the window, I admired the gay and smiling arbours that decked the roadside-gardens, whose blossoming shrubs and flowers perfumed the air. I admired the fair and graceful Seine, flowing between its own fair fields and villages, so different from the same proud Seine, as it sluggishly moves under the bridges of the capital: then came Neuilly, and its charming park; then St. Germain, with its amphitheatre of forest standing out against the blue horizon.

At a few leagues' distance from Paris, the country, without being less beautiful, assumed a harsher aspect. Flowering shrubs, fragrant but useless, were succeeded by cultivated fields; the clover was falling beneath the mower's scythe; the hay was gathered into sweet-scented heaps; and fields of standing rye, undulating under the morning breeze, resembled an ocean of ears and corn-flowers.

For the first time I felt all the poetry of spring, away from Villers-Hellon. All the joys of my beloved grandfather returned after the winter. Alas! he would return no more. My heart failed me. The smiling face of spring appeared to me ungrateful and neglectful. Lalo's thoughts and feelings sympathized with mine, and we were both affected by painful reminiscences.

We reached Pontoise at eleven; Madame Leautaud had sent her tilbury to meet us there; and in a few minutes we arrived at Busagny. This charming little country-house looks as if it had fallen from the dry and

sandy hill-side into the valley in which it stands. On one side arises a little eminence planted with tufted trees, which form a thick curtain; on the other, meadows, fields, flowers, and woods repose at its feet, bounded by a little river. This scene delighted me more by its novelty than by its beauty; and the cordiality of my reception left me no reason to regret having at last accepted Marie's pressing invitations.

After breakfast Marie took me to see her son, whose pale and sickly features were set off for the occasion with the cap I had embroidered for him. Then she proposed to accompany me to her sister-in-law's, whose chateau is situated within a few minutes' walk of Busagny.

This was only a contrivance to be alone with me: Madame Leautaud's looks and words showed me that her mind was oppressed. Were her fears of the past winter realized? had we confided our secret to unworthy keeping? I still believe in our hero. Yet my imagination, struck by Marie's evident anxiety, sometimes saw him step from his pedestal and become one of those men-machines which on the stage are employed to sing two notes, to swing their arms, roll their eyes, and march in processions: and I thought in anguish of my friendship which I had so ridiculously profaned. Filled with vague and indefinite fears, and desirous of putting an end to them by learning the truth, I consented to go immediately, forgetful of my idleness, fatigue, and the heat of the day. Unluckily, however, we were joined by Madame de Nicolai; and so we were compelled to speak of fine weather and wet, and of her daughter's health, which seriously alarmed her.

I was struck on our arrival by the majestic beauty of Osny. This seat, the property of the Lameth family, was given by M. Scipion de Nicolai upon his marriage with Mademoiselle de Beauvoir. It stands on a large gravel terrace, sloping down to an extensive lawn, with a little lake which reflects its image; trees the growth of a century overshadow the winding avenues of the park, while flower-beds near the house enliven the somewhat rigid beauty of the scene.

The interior corresponds with the exterior of the mansion. Long and echoing corridors, a broad grand stair-

case ornamented with exotics, a chapel, and a Gothic saloon, constitute the princely residence.

Madame Scipion's kind and simple manners form a pleasing contrast with what surrounds her. Neither lovely nor elegant, and without much wit, she charms by her good nature, her gentleness, and anxiety to please. Left an orphan, married for her dower, and neglected by her husband, the secret grief, that manifests itself in her own despite, adds to her charms, and it is difficult not to love her.

M. Scipion de Nicolai has all the good qualities that make life pleasant to a bachelor, and all the faults that make a married home uncomfortable; delighting especially in dogs, horses, the chase, and betting; shunning the society of women who are only amiable and coquettes in mind, he lives on horseback, at the Jockey Club, and on the Boulevard de Gand.

Madame Scipion's sister was to be married in a few days; and our hostess spoke to us with touching anxiety of her fears and solicitude for her happiness. As for Mademoiselle de Beauvoir, pleased with the idea of her approaching marriage, she bestowed less thought on the future than on her wedding-dress and jewels. Her features were pretty and pleasing; not sufficiently beautiful, unfortunately, to make up for a very indifferent figure. She seemed kind and gentle, and behaved with amiable politeness to me, whom she had never seen before.

We returned late from our visit. We had to dress for dinner; and in the evening, being compelled to converse on indifferent topics, I could only squeeze Marie's hand expressively; and on retiring for the night, I felt surprised at the unusual amiability of Mademoiselle Delvaux, who, up to this time, had treated me almost coolly.

The next day I and Marie found ourselves alone at last. M. de Leautaud was away on an angling excursion; Madame de Nicolai was occupied in superintending her gardeners. We shut ourselves up in my room; and I was on the point of interrogating Marie respecting her distress, when she said abruptly, that "she wished me to marry." This unexpected address took me completely by surprise, and I was unable to utter a word. Without, however,

awaiting any reply, Madame de Leautaud proceeded to speak of the reasons that should govern my decision; pointing out to me the void in my existence, and describing the falseness and dependence of my position in respect to the world.

"You have no fortune, and are almost twenty-three," she added; "a good marriage can alone confer in society that liberty necessary to your character. Listen seriously while I remind you of certain disagreeable but wholesome truths. Your health is not good, and the nature of your complaint does not add to your beauty; you will soon be an old maid, as dissatisfied with yourself as you will be disagreeable to others. Avert this by becoming an amiable wife. You would not hear me last winter, and evaded the subject every time I attempted to speak on it. Now I have caught you; and here, away from the influence of your aunts, I am determined to persuade you to make up your mind, and to make you happy in spite of yourself."

I listened in mute astonishment to the sudden proposition, and Madame Leautaud's conjugal harangue. Guessing instinctively that this extraordinary solicitude on my account only veiled her real object, I answered, somewhat impatiently, that she was very kind; and expressing my sensibility of good intentions, declared my willingness to obey, provided the husband suited me.

"Perhaps you have high expectations, and romantic notions of love? Confess to me what you would accept, and I will afterwards tell you whom I propose."

"You know, Marie, I no longer believe in love as described by the poets, and as we imagine it in our dreams. I am resigned to take the world as it is, and consent to marry for worldly reasons. But you must understand, that, if I do not exact a handsome husband, a refined and affectionate mind, and a heart all passion; if I determine to make a reasonable choice reasonably, I am justly entitled to regard, as indispensable in the party whom I shall accept, an honourable position in the world, fortune, and an estimable and established character. I shall be indulgent as to his age; I would even consent to immure myself in a castle, or dwell in a country town; for I am of Cæsar's

opinion, and would prefer being first in a village to living second in Rome."

"Excellent! my project tallies admirably with your views. You will *reign*, for the husband whom I have chosen for you is a sub-prefect: his age is thirty-eight; he has no fortune, but his hopes of advancement are certain. He is good-looking and clever, and his name is George,—a pretty name, is it not? In short, he is Mademoiselle Delvaux's brother."

I was satisfied with all this, except the conclusion; and I could not disguise from Marie that it would be as difficult for me to love Mademoiselle Delvaux as to obtain her affection. To reassure me, she told me that her governess's opinion of me was changed; that she now recognised her injustice, loved me with all her heart, and was the first who had desired this marriage, which was to make me her sister.

I promised to reflect on the inconveniences attending my position, in order the better to appreciate the advantages of the step proposed for my welfare; and when, farther, I almost accepted the match, so far as the position of the party was concerned, and promised to prepare to listen favourably to his personal overtures, Marie could no longer conceal her extreme joy, and embraced me tenderly.

"Your sinister and mysterious air at first quite alarmed me," said I; "I almost feared that your terrors of the past winter had retaken possession of you, and knew not what horrible phantom you had conjured up to test my friendship."

"Your friendship and affection are more necessary to me than ever. My former vague fears have become threatening realities. But you will save me; you have assured me you will save me."

Madame de Leautaud then informed me that her husband was exceedingly jealous, still more of appearances than of her love; that a person whom he had formerly loved, and who still possessed influence over him, revenged herself for his neglect, by wounding his vanity in the reputation of the woman who had been preferred to her. Already had M. de Leautaud reproved her with asperity

for some girlish indiscretions; and she foresaw that he would never forgive the intrigue with M. Clavé, which was at the same time a blemish and a subject for ridicule.

"Tell me at once," said I, "whether M. Clavé is really in Africa—as I am convinced he is—or at the Opera, as you were so certain in the winter?"

"Once more, I repeat that he is at the Opera. I recognised him distinctly among a group of chorus-singers; and that his name is on the list, Mademoiselle Delvaux is as certain as myself."

"I am still incredulous. To the perhaps deceptious evidence of your eyes, I have the more tangible proof of a letter to oppose. Why would you not suffer me to answer it? We should have known by this time whether to fear him or to forget him."

"You have not reflected, Marie, that he only dated his letter from Algiers the more easily to obtain your answer, and to remove from your mind all thoughts of its compromising you. Believe me, he is at this moment a *figurant* at the Opera in Paris."

"It may be so, but I am unable to believe it; and even should I compromise myself still further, I am resolved to write to him in Algiers,—if only to convince you, and to set your mind at rest."

"Do no such thing, I entreat you—I implore—"

"Then confess that you have seen him, that you have written to him."

"No, indeed," said Madame de Leautaud with excitement. "I have obtained the most positive information respecting his circumstances, which are indeed deplorable: he is plunged in debt, and hiding from his creditors. His object is to enter society; and he is just the sort of person to make use of a scandalous intrigue as a passport; in a word, to ruin us by exposing our letters. Your family will be covered with obloquy through your inconsiderate folly; while M. de Leautaud will probably demand a separation to save himself from the ridicule which in overwhelming me would reflect upon him. I could never survive the blow. No sacrifice is too great to prevent the possibility of such a disclosure. For Heaven's sake, assist me, Marie—save me, in saving yourself."

I confess that all this shocked me extremely. Madame de Leautaud's fears gradually communicated themselves to me. I felt that she was hiding from me a secret—perhaps an interview, or a letter. What was I to imagine? Between a young woman and a young wife no perfect confidence can exist. I dared not question Marie; I dared not probe her secret; I knew not how I could *protect* her, still less how I could save her. Taking her hands in silence, I gave her time to collect herself, to speak more calmly.

Marie had, in fact, formed a scheme, counselled, or at least countenanced, by Mademoiselle Delvaux; and upon hearing it, my terror became excessive.

At the time of her marriage she had received a set of diamonds; and her project was, to dispose of these, to employ the proceeds in arranging M. Clavé's affairs, purchasing back the letters, and sending him from France,—and thus put it out of his power to betray us by an indiscreet disclosure, which, unsupported by proof, would be incredible.

The project appeared to me at once dangerous and impracticable. I could bring myself to doubt the noble sentiments of frankness and honour with which my friendship had endowed M. Clavé; I could believe him unfortunate; that, compelled to have recourse to the stage for bread, he might have been tempted, in a momentary fit of desperation, to threaten Marie with revenge for her neglect and contempt: but depraved, or unprincipled, I could not believe him. I did not believe him capable of saying to a woman whom he had loved,—"Gold is as necessary to me as honour to you: purchase my silence, or I will ruin your reputation."

I told Marie all that passed in my mind. I supplicated her not to wound M. Clavé's feelings by such a proposition, nor herself drive him to the very steps that it was her object to prevent his taking. Neither could I see how I could be of service to her; I could only advise—nor was my judgment to be relied on in a dangerous or difficult emergency.

Marie entreated me, with the most urgent entreaties, to banish for ever all my romantic illusions of the noble-

minded chevalier of past times. She solemnly assured me that she was fully justified in believing in M. Clavé's want of honour; that she could, and ought to purchase his silence. She told me that M. Delvaux was to be let into our secret—in short, his future bride's reputation, and his sister's peace, which would both be compromised, if Madame de Nicolai should discover the intrigue, made us certain of his concurrence and discretion. When unset, the diamonds would no longer be recognisable. I was to pretend to have received them from an old uncle, and to sell them previously to my marriage, in order to purchase less expensive jewels for that occasion; all which, she said, would appear too natural to awaken suspicion.

I was, however, far from satisfied; and without daring positively to refuse Marie, I sought to raise objections, and to oppose difficulties, that I might avoid taking part in this imprudent course. I pointed out to her that she might, with equal safety, confide her secret directly to M. Delvaux, through his sister; and expressed myself at a loss to understand how I could be so indispensably necessary an agent in a project of which I disapproved.

"Your heedlessness and inexperience blind you," replied she. "Mademoiselle Delvaux, who is willing to assist me even beyond the extent of merely advising, would never consent to serve me directly. That which in an unmarried girl amounts to nearly unpardonable giddiness, would in a person at her time of life, enjoying my mother's confidence, and entrusted with a sacred responsibility, be accounted an act of infamy. As for M. Delvaux, a man cannot oppose himself to a man in an affair of this kind. You alone can unite the moral influence of the second Marie to the influence of hard cash of the first; you only can receive my letters, and make known my conditions. While the least step on my part would add arms to those already possessed by M. Clavé, yours cannot compromise you; for he could have no interest to divulge it; and authorized by M. Delvaux, no one could presume to blame your conduct. No one but you can undertake the conveyance of the money to M. Clavé, in the form of a pension, if we should be unable to trust him so far as to pay him all at once."

I yielded, and promised all that was required of me; too weakly forgetting that it is not permitted to repair the evil consequences of one false step by another.

CHAPTER XXXII.

We frequently renewed our conversation respecting M. Clavé. Marie's terror and despair infected me more and more every day; and I gradually became almost reconciled to the marriage she proposed. In our long and solitary walks we were accustomed to speak of it as a matter finally settled. I was not indifferent to my future role of "*préfette*," for in our plans M. Delvaux's protectors invariably promoted him to a prefecture upon his marriage. I saw myself in imagination doing the honours of an entertainment, and gaining the good opinion of all the proprietors in my husband's department, to be directed into the proper channel on occasion of the elections; I visited the poor and the schools; I was blessed by the wretched, esteemed by my husband, and——in short, the flattering dream was complete, and I succeeded in engrafting a romance on the commonplace life that would have fallen to my lot on the realization of Marie's project of marriage.

At times, however, my resolution failed. When I spoke of my marriage with doubt, timidity, or sorrow, Marie, calling in aid a thousand little seductive arts, spoke to me of our return to Paris, of our renewed and strengthened friendshjp, of the splendour of the capital, and of my bride's-clothes. Then she would revert to her project of the diamonds, foretelling its realization and its consequences; anticipating with delight the happy day when, shut up together, we should once more reperuse our redeemed *billets-doux* previously to offering them up an *auto-da-fé* to our peace of mind. In short, without convincing my reason, she forestalled every objection.

The country air, exercise, and amusement, soon restored my health. I seldom suffered pain, and added to

my diet occasionally strawberries, some excellent cheese, and milk which we went to the farm to drink, warm and frothy from the cow.

The life I led was agreeable and diversified enough. I arose late, and the breakfast-bell summoned me from my room. Marie and I shut ourselves up to work in the library, or walked in the park,—always alone, for M. de Leauteaud spent his mornings in tracing a plan, out on horseback, or quietly angling for gudgeons in the brook. At four o'clock, Marie visited her son in the nursery, and I seated myself at the piano until the first dinner-bell. After dinner, we chatted on the terrace, or played at billiards, or sang, until we separated for the night, which was my time for reading and correspondence.

Madame de Leautaud, desirous of doing the honours of her neighbourhood, took me to Pontoise, a pretty little town built on a smiling hill-side, with a Gothic cathedral, offering handsome façades and charming specimens of the architecture of the middle ages;—then to visit M. de G——, at his seat a few leagues from Busagny.

The morning we selected for this latter excursion was oppressively warm; dense masses of cloud rapidly gathered, dark and threatening, immediately over our heads. Soon vivid flashes of lightning, preceding heavy peals of thunder, were succeeded by torrents of rain that wetted us to the skin before we arrived. A gate opening into the high street of the village admitted the carriage into a gloomy paved yard; and upon alighting we were ushered into a spacious half-darkened drawing-room, with furniture of fifty years' standing; an host of the same age gravely welcomed us with the air of one awaking from a dream.

We arrived laughing heartily at our disasters on the road: but the fixed and unhappy look of the owner of the mansion produced a sudden and general reaction. A walk in the garden was proposed. We found the walks carefully raked, and without the trace of a footstep; the very trees had for me a mournful and dishevelled air, raindrops for tears falling fast from the leaves; while not a flower was in blossom.

I communicated my impressions to Madame de Leau-

taud; and she replied,—"M. de G—— is my father's friend: I frequently see him, and always as you see him now. It is whispered that in very early life our neighbour married a charming girl, with every prospect of happiness. Up to his wedding-day, M. de G—— was the happiest of men and the tenderest of lovers; the day after, he was no longer seen to smile, and his eye had grown cold and dull. His young wife never quitted her room, and a year afterwards died, after having given birth to a son."

Marie could satisfy my curiosity no further; a painful mystery seemed to chill the place, and I left it sorrowfully affected, and a prey to profound emotion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

M. Delvaux arrived on a Saturday evening, to sign the contract, and Mademoiselle de Beauvoir's marriage was to take place the following Monday. My heart beat violently as I entered the room that contained my *possibly* future husband. Without being old, he was no longer young; very light hair, very blue eyes, and very rosy cheeks, composed a calm and complacent set of features in which nothing could reasonably be objected to: his form was imposingly obese, and his slow and measured language strongly characteristic of the sub-prefect.

In the course of this first evening Madame de Leautaud contrived us a thousand little opportunities to speak to each other. He did not converse very well; but the few words with which he interrupted the tedium of reading the contract were well received; and when Marie asked me what I thought of him, I replied that time was necessary to enable me to form an opinion, but that in the meanwhile he did not displease me.

The next day was Palm-Sunday; and after having attended mass in the chapel at Osny, Marie led me into

the park. She was in triumphant spirits,—the success of the candidate of the previous evening having left no doubt in her mind of the fortunate issue of her project. I had not said "nay;" and as for M. Delvaux, he had said "aye" as plainly as man could speak; and she had decided that this day of festivity, of confusion and preparation, should answer for the disappearance of her diamonds.

It was no easy matter for her thus to rob herself. The jewels were kept in the drawer of a bureau, of which she alone possessed a key; the passage that led to her room led to no other; it was impossible for a stranger to invent a pretext for passing that way; it would therefore be necessary to suppose that a strange thief, knowing exactly where the diamonds were kept, had chosen his time to force the drawer, regardless of danger, and fearless of a sudden surprise, against which he could not guard, and from which escape would have been impossible.

To prevent suspicion falling on the people of the house, it was necessary to make some of these improbabilities appear probable—to find, therefore, a pretext for removing the diamonds from the drawer and taking them down into the drawing-room, and to leave them there without too palpable negligence.

These indispensable circumstances, so difficult to combine, almost naturally presented themselves this day. Of that, I was aware; and notwithstanding my desire not to understand it, I had consequently only faint objections to urge: I could object to the project, but retard or prevent its execution I could not; the hour was come, and it must either be renounced for ever, or carried into prompt and immediate execution.

I had recourse, in despair, to the information it was necessary to obtain regarding M. Delvaux: I remarked that my aunts might oppose obstacles to my wishes, that I was naturally anxious to know something of him who was to be my future lord and master, &c. But Marie having met and overcome every one of my scruples, once more I yielded.

After dinner we led the conversation to Mademoiselle

de Beauvoir's wedding-presents, and subsequently introduced the subject of her diamonds. Marie expressed her preference of Lecointe's style of setting to that of Jeanisset; and sending for her jewel-case in support of her opinion, its truth was quickly admitted, and due honour ascribed to M. Lecointe's good taste.

The drawing-room was soon deserted; Madame de Nicolai went to walk in the garden; MM. de Nicolai and de Leautaud were, I believe, obliged to go to Pontoise on business; vespers called the ladies to church; while some of the domestics were engaged at Osny, making preparations for the next day; and others had errands to perform in the town. In short, all being abandoned and in disorder in the little castle, Marie placed her jewel-case on a work-table that stood near the low windows opening on the outer yard, and before which beggars were accustomed to solicit alms that were never refused. Afterwards, while M. Delvaux was engaged whispering in my ear amorous assurances of a sub-prefect's love, Marie quickly removed her diamonds from their case, and took them up stairs to her room, to avoid the risk of having our plan executed by a real thief. Then we in our turn quitted the room, and took a long walk together.

We were absent three hours. Upon our return, as we had hoped and foreseen, we found no one in the drawing-room, and the case was ostensibly removed by Madame de Leautaud. By way of additional precaution, Marie asked her mother in the evening whether during our long absence she had entered the saloon; and the reply was in the negative. M. Alfred de Gouy, who had been the only visiter during the general absence, had made the house re-echo with his cries; and after having bawled himself hoarse, and left the house in despair, had been met in the park by Madame de Nicolai.

To neglect no means of justification, Madame de Leautaud left the key in the lock of the diamond-drawer; and as the domestics on fête-days, and such extraordinary occasions as the preparations for the marriage at Osny, were scarcely ever at Busagny, suspicion would naturally light on a stranger.

In the evening that followed this great conspiracy, al-

though M. Delvaux was openly very amorous and extremely attentive, I was so pre-occupied by the thoughts of the steps we had taken, and the sad impressions inspired by Mademoiselle de Beauvoir's approaching marriage, that Marie, perceiving it, led me out to walk on the terrace; and, wishing to dispel my dark forebodings, began talking about Mdme. de N——, who was expected. I knew this lady to be a votary of high fashion, and feared that she would be dissatisfied and disdainful; but Marie assured me that we had nothing of the sort to apprehend, and related to me her melancholy and affecting story.

Madame de M——, forgetful of a husband by whom she was adored, and their infant, permitted the dishonourable addresses of M. de F——, and soon returned his passion. Madame de N—— at her birth was clandestinely removed by M. de F——, and confided to his wife, an angelic creature, who lavished the most tender cares on the infant, and continued to nurse it with disinterested and affectionate solicitude, until Madame de M——, separated from her husband, could herself take charge of her child. Madame de M—— having no fortune, was compelled to build all hopes of her daughter's future prospects on an admirable voice; and the child was educated accordingly. Occasionally the mother saw her son: separated by the world, the brother and sister were not divided in their hearts; and after Madame de M——'s death, her poor orphan found a welcome refuge in her brother's strong affection.

The young man's conduct was above all praise. Adored by his father, he exerted all his influence to make him love and appreciate his sister, and succeeded in procuring that she should share with him their parent's name, fortune, and affection.

I found Madame de N—— amiable, beautiful, and of pleasing manners; she sang with refined talent and an admirable facility of execution. Having both of us received lessons from Madame de Lina Freppa, the discourse turned on music, and we were soon almost friends.

As for M. de N——, he appeared to me too conscious of his personal charms to care about pleasing by his conversation. He spoke well on matters relating to art,

very ordinarily on fashionable topics, and worse than indifferently on grave and serious subjects. A violent Carlist, his was one of those enthusiastic devotions to the cause, that invent mottoes and go the length of wearing a cravat of its party's colours.

Mademoiselle de Beauvoir's marriage was solemnised in the church at Busagny. The bride preserved throughout the ceremony her happy equanimity, while her sister was agitated by the most lively anxiety. The bridegroom, M. de G——, was far from appearing either happy or even cheerful: I felt for him; for Marie had explained to me the cause of his misery. Brought up almost together, he had passionately loved Marie, had offered her his hand and his heart, and had been rejected. The news of her marriage with M. de Leautaud reaching him at Vienna, where he had sought oblivion of the past, a dangerous fit of illness ensued. M de G—— was handsome, with a noble countenance, a distinguished figure, and agreeable manners,—in a word, far superior in every respect to M. de Leautaud; yet with the melancholy inconsistency of the human heart, he was unhappy in his love, and, as if in revenge, gained the affections of an amiable young girl to whom he was utterly indifferent. Why, O God! this continual path of suffering? why these conflicting affections, which destroy your feeble creatures?

A stranger to these ordered joys and secret griefs, I sat apart, turning over the leaves of some albums spread over the drawing-room table. A young gentleman, solitary and mournful like myself, shared my amusement: an exchange of books and commonplace remarks led our thoughts into unison. He was Mademoiselle de Beauvoir's cousin, and her guardian's son; and he was mortified by the indifferent welcome extended to him, and the neglect with which his father was treated. M. de Beauvoir was talented and well educated, and possessed the most noble sentiments; he made me forget that the hours were long, and that I should therefore find them wearisome. He sat near me during an interminable dinner; and in the evening, during the fireworks in honour of the wedding he was again by my side. We

almost became intimate friends; and upon his leaving, I parted from him with regret.

Marie was very satirical the next morning on the subject of my conquest of the day before; and finding fault with me for having tolerated attentions not from M. Delvaux, expressed herself in language almost amounting to reproof. This foretaste of matrimonial despotism inspired me with discouraging reflections. However, M. Delvaux's sedulous attention and his sister's tenderness gradually restored me to my former indifference. In a few days they both set out for Paris, M. Delvaux expressing himself desirous of a definite answer, and professing a due share of amorous impatience. Madame de Leautaud spoke for me; replying that my decision would depend upon my family and the advice of my friends, and that I had no personal objection.

I wrote to my aunts, to announce the husband who would present himself for their approval; and to the Marquess of Mornay, whose generous character and excellent judgment made me anxious to have his advice. I begged him to procure information at the Ministère de l'Intérieure; and conjured him, by his friendship for my mother, to assist my irresolution by his good counsel.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I had been three weeks at Busagny; Madame de Montbreton urged my departure, to accelerate my arrival at Corcy; and I only waited for answers from my aunts and M. de Mornay, to set out. Although my position induced me to consent to a marriage of convenience, I secretly hoped that obstacles would break off the match, and many causes conspired to strengthen my wishes.

M. Delvaux's political opinions seemed to me narrow-minded, and formed in servile imitation of those of the ministry for the time being, whatever its shade of politics or character might be. He understood nothing of the

royalists' devotion to long-tried institutions, nor of the patriotism of the liberal, who anticipates the future. Intolerant of discussion, to support his principle of blind and implicit obedience to the ruling powers of the day, he would admit no other argument than coercion. Moreover, M. Delvaux, having to return in a few weeks to his duties, was desirous that the ceremony should take place immediately: and that terrified me. I durst not confide my fears to Marie. Her ideas on the subject of matrimony were most arbitrary; she professed it as her opinion that a husband should be accepted without discussion; and met my least word expressive of opposition by sarcastic and offensive reflections on my lofty pretensions. In short, to avoid her ill-temper and my secret irresolution, I abandoned myself to the decision of my relatives, to the advice of my friends, and to the grace of God.

Differing from me, Marie wished to contrive the discovery of the supposititious robbery of the jewels with as little delay as possible; while I was of opinion that we had better take our time, and wait till the winter,—which seemed to me the more advisable plan. The jewel-case, as I have said, was kept in a drawer of which she alone possessed the key; and as, in the country, she was certain of having no occasion to wear her diamonds, it was much easier therefore to let them lie forgotten, than to find a means of calling attention towards them, and then to establish the fact of their theft without suspicion of the real fact. Marie thought differently. She did not wish to be alone to bear the first shock. In six months I should be away from her in some distant department; all our elaborate arrangement to screen the servants from suspicion would by that time have been forgotten or easily overthrown, and she could not endure the terrible prospective. She told me that I could not be capable of abandoning her in the hour of danger; insisting that my presence was necessary to support her—my sympathy to save her from sinking under her fears; and, finally, that our momentous resolution required to be promptly executed.

I still adhered to my original opinion; but as it origi-

nated in a mixed sentiment of weakness and selfishness, which I was half ashamed to avow, I yielded; and we resolved that on the next day, which was a Sunday, we would deliver ourselves from all further anxiety by a bold and decisive step.

Marie, on pretence of having a few lines to write, contrary to her custom, stepped up stairs to her apartment in the middle of the day, begging M. de Leautaud and me, as we were disengaged, to accompany her, and take our seats in her comfortable *causeuses*. The conversation we presently turned on Bourguignon's well-imitated false jewelry; which I pronounced to be so perfect, that at a short distance it could not be distinguished from real stones; instancing several leaders of fashion, who, possessing superb diamonds, often wore them with Bourguignon's paste without observation. Marie maintaining the contrary, we appealed for a decision to M. de Leautaud; and I offered to produce for comparison with her diamonds the clasp of my missal, which was ornamented with some of the strass-paste. I fetched it; Marie opened her drawer, took out her jewel-case, and, to her consternation, found it—empty.

An inquiry and search was immediately instituted. The lady's maid being sent for, declared that she had never seen the jewels "since the day that Madame had sent for them in the drawing-room." Marie then remembered that on that occasion she had placed them on the work-table, and through unaccountable forgetfulness, had there left them during several hours while we were out walking. She had a distinct recollection of having carried the case up stairs on her return, and also of having hastily put it away, without first ascertaining by inspection that the diamonds were all safe within. There was no longer any doubt that they had been stolen by a beggar or a vagabond; and all the accessory circumstances that we could recall to mind strengthened and confirmed this belief. We remembered having been a very long time away, and having pushed the table near the window to waltz a little after dinner; that all the domestics were absent; that the case on the table could be plainly seen, and easily reached, through the open window; that we

had observed several men of suspicious appearance in the neighbourhood, &c.

Frantic at the consequences of his wife's negligence, M. de Leautaud upbraided her with the harshest reproaches. He ransacked every drawer, overwhelmed us with questions, and searched all our work-baskets in the drawing-room; while Marie and I stood apart in consternation, which increased when we heard of M. de Nicolai's intention of sending to the magistrates for two gendarmes to search all the servants' rooms.

The evening was spent in conjectures and recriminations, M. de Nicolai alone preserving his temper. As for M. de Leautaud, he was raving; and after having exhausted the language of passionate reproof, and suspecting nearly every body in turn, learning that M. Alfred de Gouy had been some short time alone on the deserted premises on the memorable Palm-Sunday, he seriously persuaded himself that he had taken the diamonds to present to one of his mistresses: and it was long before he would retract, with an ill grace, this insulting and unjustifiable suspicion.

All that night my terror for the consequences of our imprudence was unbounded; and the next morning I declared to Marie, that no earthly power should induce me to retain possession of her jewels (which had been hidden for some days in my room) while the officers of justice were in the house. I wished her to take them back again, and entreated her to renounce her project, if it were not yet too late. Unfortunately, she was not to be convinced. The immediate danger seemed to frighten her much less than the prospective. Her anxiety, it is true, equalled mine; but she could devise no means to have the diamonds found in a natural way, and believed that having advanced so far, the slightest hesitation would entail irreparable consequences.

Marie could not succeed in calming me; but her prayers and entreaties deprived me of courage to abandon her to herself. What was to be done with the fatal diamonds? To conceal them in her apartment was impossible: her attendant turned topsy-turvy every thing in it twenty times an hour: and M. de Leautaud had made it

the theatre of his interminable perquisitions, his despair, and loquacious invective against his wife: there was not a nook or corner safe from his prying investigation; and although I felt the extent of my poor friend's anguish, I confess that I had no courage to keep her dangerous deposit. On a sudden, while we were perplexing ourselves for an expedient in this perilous emergency, we heard the gendarmes' swords clanking on the hall-pavement, and it became necessary to act.

We were conversing in my room, and had barely time to hide them in a pair of long gloves and thrust these precipitately under the cushion of an arm-chair, into which Marie then threw herself. And so, with failing hearts and a smile on our features, we awaited the issue of this terrible judicial visit.

Who can describe our sufferings while the gendarmes were prosecuting their researches? Every step seemed directed towards us, every question to be addressed to us, every look to watch us. Seated together at the door of my room, which we had left open in order to appear to be observing with interest what was passing, we experienced a degree of terror amounting to the most painful torture all the time of the minute investigation of the gendarmes. Alas! how vain and weak are struggles against remorse and conscious guilt!

Nor did our tribulation cease upon the departure of the dreaded instruments of law: another determination became immediately necessary; for to conceal the diamonds with their setting was impossible. I had no hiding-place for them. All my keys were kept by Lalo, my cashier and my confidante, who unscrupulously, and with the chartered impunity of an old and faithful personal attendant, detected and shared half my secrets, read all the letters that I did not show her, and informed herself of whatever I might have wished to withhold from her knowledge. This Marie knew; but still more unwilling to take Lalo into our confidence than to release me from my trust, she resolved to destroy the setting of the jewels, and to convert her rich ornaments into unsightly and common-looking little stones.

We applied ourselves to this work in my room, with

penknives and scissors for tools. The task was a laborious one, and we were very clumsy: we even tore our hands in several places, heroically bearing the pain without complaint or relenting. Fortunately when we came to the larger diamonds, the idea occurred to us of breaking up the setting with our feet; and so we facilitated and accelerated the rest of the work without farther lacerating our hands.

While thus employed, we spoke of M. Delvaux, of my coming marriage, my wedding-presents, and the entertainments; for Marie, seeing me anxious and terrified at the least noise, wished to amuse me and to distract my attention. I remarked, as I wrenched off a large pearl, that it seemed the younger sister of one we had admired in an enamel ring worn by the Countess de Courval.

"It is not perfectly round," said Marie, "which impairs its value; and perhaps remounted on a ring its defect would be conspicuous. But if you admired and will accept it, I shall be extremely gratified."

"Thank you," replied I, laughing; "but that would be robbing our hero."

"An excellent fancy strikes me. My jewels are in some sort the first cause of your marriage; and determined I am to select from them your wedding-present—a souvenir to unite our past girlish intimacy with our future more womanly friendship. The large pearl shall be your George. Here are four smaller ones, which we will name after the persons of our wretched drama: this, the worst-looking, shall be M. Clavé; this, Mademoiselle Delvaux; and here are the two Maries."

Although I laughed good-humouredly at this sally, I refused to accept the pearls. "Nay," said Marie, her temper rising, "it is a wedding-gift, and you shall in return make me another, which I promise not to refuse. Will not that be like an exchange? . . . You still object; then I propose another arrangement. I am, you know, indebted to you in a little sum I borrowed: take the five pearls in payment, and we are quits."

"On those terms I do not mind accepting them."

"Thanks. Here they are; put them away apart from the rest."

The dinner-bell put a stop to our unfinished labours for that day; and as there was company, wishing that our appearance should not be remarked, we hastened to conceal the jewels between the lining of a reticule, leaving some with part of their setting attached. The next day, Marie would have ended our work; but I opposed it, partly through idleness; telling her, as she observed me closely, that the fragments of the setting would make them easily recognised, and adding that we should remove it all before offering them for sale.

While Lalo was undressing me that evening, I asked her what effect was produced below stairs by the discovery of the theft, and the steps that had been taken in consequence. She told me that all the domestics were in consternation, and openly expressed their discontent at Madame de Leautaud's negligence in leaving property of such enormous value exposed in the drawing-room to the first comer; as also their indignation at the conduct of her attendant in not having removed the key from her mistress's drawers while the wedding entertainments were celebrating at Osny; thus subjecting them to the humiliating researches of the police, and the still more humiliating suspicions of the family. I also understood that M. de Nicolai's suspicions having lighted on a recently engaged domestic, named Stephen, the poor man was in the utmost distress, fearing a discharge without character, and the consequent ruin of himself, his wife, and family.

The grief of this poor man, whom I knew to be innocent, yet knew not how to clear from suspicion, strongly affected me. I had believed myself guilty of an action imprudent and blameable only; but when I rigorously examined my conduct, the feelings of remorse which I experienced were so intolerable, that forgetful of every thing but poor Stephen's misfortune, I charged Lalo to console him by assuring him from me that so far from doubting his probity, if he should be compelled to leave Busagny, I would recommend him to my aunts, who among their numerous friends would certainly provide him with a good situation. I sent him my address, in order, by insuring his application to me, to retain certain

means to repair the involuntary injury I had done him; and I further promised to speak in his favour to Madame de Leautaud. The next day I endeavoured to communicate these sentiments of repentance to Marie, and earnestly besought her courageously to support an innocent man, our victim, against the unjust suspicion of her family. She promised compliance; but weak and forgetful in the extreme, she either forgot or shrank from fulfilling her engagement.

The answers I expected from Paris, as to my marriage, arrived. My aunts recommended me not to be precipitate; representing the position of a fortuneless subprefect as very precarious. M. de Mornay was more precise. He wrote me that M. Delvaux's future prospects were not promising—that he had nothing to hope, and every thing to fear: the information the Marquess had obtained was by no means favourable; and shortly advising a refusal, my mother's noble friend supported his advice by unanswerable reasoning.

Marie's indignation at this intelligence knew no bounds. She ridiculed my firm confidence in M. de Mornay, declared that his intervention was ill-timed and most improper, attacked his arguments, &c. Madame de Nicolai also thought proper to inflict upon me a jeremiad of formidable length and asperity. In short, I was harassed all day by their offensive remarks, turning continually upon my dependent position, which, according to them, left me no liberty of choice, and made it my duty to accept with gratitude the first offer.

A poor girl can suffer no worse martyrdom than the persecution of friends bent upon providing her with a husband. They would make her happy in spite of herself; and there is no pardon for her who revolts against the panacea of happiness with which friendship would drug her on these occasions.

Sad and weary, and desirous of leaving Busagny, the next day, I told Marie that my marriage with M. Delvaux being broken off, I would return to her the diamonds. Unable to control her passion at this, she accused me of an intention to ruin her—reproached me with abandoning her in revenge for a few angry words

prompted by the warmth of her friendship. She said tauntingly that I had never loved her; that I had filled her head with M. Clavé, and now left her to support alone the consequences of an indiscretion that I had shared; that my conduct was selfish, cruel, malignant. Then followed a torrent of tender reproaches and entreaties, which unfortunately had far more influence than her invective over my resolution.

I was heart-broken. I tried in vain to calm her, in vain I sought to make her comprehend that my position being a thousand times more dependent than hers, it would be impossible for me to assist her; that I knew no jewellers; that I never went out alone; that I should have no opportunity of seeing M. Clavé, even to give him the diamonds themselves, and still less of sending them without taking Lalo into our confidence.

Although compelled to admit the truth of all this, Marie still asked me to retain the jewels until she could find an opportunity to convert them into money; and to justify her request, urged the impossibility of keeping them herself—the absence of Mademoiselle Delvaux, of whose advice and assistance she would be deprived for six whole months—and, finally, the insignificance of the favour asked at my hands—simply to keep a reticule in one of my drawers. Almost ashamed of myself for not having married to assist Madame de Leautaud, I consented to accept the less important part she now proposed, with more vexation than serious anxiety.

I stayed a few days longer at Busagny, Madame de Leautaud determined herself to accompany me to Paris; and the journey proved a most delightful one. After threading, on a fine June morning, the shady avenues of the forest of St. Germain, we exchanged our light britzka and rapid horses for the railway-train; and were soon whirled to Paris by all-powerful steam, the favourite Pegasus of the practical philosophers of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A FEW days after, I set out for Corcy, where I was received with the most affectionate welcome by Madame de Montbreton. I related to her the matrimonial project of her sister, complaining in mild terms of Marie's asperity, and her mother's harsh censure of my refusal. Madame de Montbreton approved my conduct, denouncing the match as a most ineligible one, according to her ideas; M. Delvaux having no fortune, his position being precarious, his family plebeian, and his own nullity being incontestable.

"My dear child," she added, "Marie would have thrown you away upon her governess's brother; but you must not bear malice. You know my mother only sees with *her* eyes; that my sister has hardly common sense; and she is so thoughtless for herself, that it may be easily forgiven her being so for others."

My first return to Villers-Hellon awakened many painful reminiscences, and cost me abundance of bitter tears.

When, in former years, I had returned after the winter, I used to spring from the carriage to meet my venerable grandfather, to kiss his silvery hair and return his warm smile; to embrace all my old nurses, who half stifled me with their caresses, and deafened me with their questions. Then I revisited every room in the house: first, my little tower; next, my own apartment; thence I ran to the drawing-room, and from the drawing-room into the garden. I wished to see my good peasants, my own favourite trees, and my pets in the poultry yard and stable,—all at once. I experienced unspeakable happiness in living to behold again all the objects of my affections. Now the sight of all that had once been my joy inflicted the most poignant sorrow. My good grandfather's arm-chair was empty—*his* room was closed. I felt that with him had departed all I had to love in this scene of my happy childhood, and my first impulse was to repair to his tomb and weep.

I found the turf green and flowery. I felt that there was for this last asylum a life of regretful remembrance. Every hour of my grandfather's life had been a blessing to those about him; and in the village his name was never mentioned without devotion, and not always without tears.

My aunt Blanche, after having allowed me to indulge unrestrained the first burst of my grief treated me with that delicate kindness which, inexpressible in words, is read in the eyes, and felt in the manner and tone of voice: my uncle Maurice was attentive in the extreme; and their children as charming as ever. Valentine placed his tiny hands before my eyes to stop my tears, and said, with his sweet voice,—"Do laugh, dear aunt; pray do laugh for me." And the stouter, Arthur, held out his rosy cheeks, which he patiently submitted to my lengthened kisses.

I had returned to Corcy by way of Longpont; where I was received as a long-lost child by the excellent Madame de Montesquiou, who expressed the warmest anxiety for my health and happiness, and future prospects. It was arranged that after the six weeks that I was to spend with Madame de Montbreton, I should make her house my home; and the prospect of dwelling with so prudent and experienced an adviser was a source of much comfort.

Never had Corcy been so brilliant and so animated. They led there the most delightful country life imaginable. The whole of the Montaigu family passed part of the summer there. Madame de M———, arrived from Rome, whither she had fled to make a kind of Leucadian leap, more fortunate than Sappho, had there found oblivion, and returned to enchant us with her lively wit and brilliant spirits. Madame de B——— was still the same kind, merry, corpulent creature. Finally, M. A. de M———, the artist, was, as ever, blunt and good-humoured—two qualities not over pleasing in him to Madame de Montbreton, who regarded as a great deficiency his want of those impassioned feelings, or that mute admiration usually the tribute of young men to the hospitality of a gracious lady hostess. A great deal of M. de Montaigu's talent lay in his brushes and in his voice. It would perhaps have been imprudent to talk seriously with him; but it was most agreeable to hear him sing the sentiments and impressions of others. We often played in concert.

To his rich voice he added a brilliant facility of execution, which could only have been attained by severe study. He would repeat from memory the most difficult *fioritures* of Lablache and Tamburini, never required pressing to sing, and was never tired.

The family were nearly always united at Corcy. After breakfast we stayed in the drawing-room; and while Madame de Montbreton reclined on her long chair, we conversed with her by turns. Then we read or worked; and, after an hour's toilette, met at dinner: the evenings were spent in general conversation, or in music, and occasionally a dance. All the families in the neighbourhood met at Corcy on Sunday.

I continued to suffer from my internal complaint, which kept my complexion as pale as ever, and I almost lived on milk and strawberries. Occasionally I took a walk, and more frequently long rides on horseback. On my noble and fiery Eiram, left for my use by M. Elmore, I often rode over to Villers-Hellon; or, accompanied by M. de Montbreton, made excursions to view all the distant seats, extensive prospects, and romantic spots about the country. Sometimes we went shopping to the little village of Villers-Coterets.

M. de Montbreton's amiability increased every day. He paid me the most assiduous attentions—very singular in the great merit of their not being addressed to the young and insignificant girl, but to the young wife, refined, accomplished, and elevated in anticipation, by an aristocratic alliance, to the honour of commanding universal homage and adoration. Nothing could be more absurd than this little anticipated amour. I laughed at it—rather amused to permit addresses to my future, tolerable by their perspective, but of which I should never have suffered the foolish levity, had they been addressed to my present. I spoke of it to Madame de Montbreton; who, highly delighted, asked me, laughing, to rid her, by a little forbearance, of the jealousy of her husband, who she averred became insupportably dull when he had only herself to love.

Madame de Montbreton was a firm believer in Mesmerism; she preached the mysteries of magnetism, implicitly avouched its miraculous cures, and manifested in short all

the enthusiasm of a proselyte. M. de Montesquiou was the antagonist with whom she found it most difficult to cope; indeed her attacks upon his rational and well-founded incredulity having all failed, she determined to convince him triumphantly by proving on me the extent of her somniferous power.

Upon my return one day from a distant ride, overpowered by the sultry weather and a violent pain in my stomach, she accordingly had me undressed, and made me lie down on a soft sofa. Placing my knees betwixt hers, she next told me to close my eyes, and commenced a series of slow and continuous passes, which at first seemed to thicken the air I breathed; and, in the course of half an hour, plunged me into a deep sleep, which lasted some time. I heard loud cries of joyful surprise on awakening. Unconsciously I had become a rare and precious subject, the hope and honour of magnetic influence. It was proposed to renew the experiment; then to interrogate me respecting my sensations. I was of opinion that my sleep had been induced by fatigue; but to this a thousand conclusive arguments were opposed; and, too ill to contest the point, I suffered my languor to prevail, and believed what I was wished to believe.

New experiments were tried the following day. Sleep again confirmed the first triumph; without, however, convincing the incredulous, who presumed to think it natural that I should go to sleep at midnight, after a day of fatiguing exercise. They had, moreover, my silence to oppose to Madame de Montbreton's triumphs; for unfortunately I did not speak, and—a mute Pythonissa—I was without an oracle, under the inspiration of the god who deprived me of sight.

One morning I was awakened by Madame de Montbreton's entering my room with the sun's first rays, and seating herself on my bed. "Well," said she, "you have spoken at last. You have been talking of me, of your health, of the diamonds———" I shuddered when she came to this word; but the explanation that followed brought a smile upon my lips, and calm to my mind. I had, it seems, answered her questions respecting her sister's jewel-case, and the circumstances attending the robbery of the diamonds; which, I had said, had been stolen

by a foreigner, sold to a Jew, and were no longer in France, &c. It was impossible for me to believe that I had said all this; and not at all desirous of becoming a false prophet, and being erected into a sibyl in the face of the world, I begged her to keep my revelations a secret. But to this she would by no means consent. In ecstacies at her success, she wrote a joyful account of the brilliant result of her experiments on me to her mother—a professed enemy of Mesmerism—and triumphantly proclaimed her success to her neighbours and visiters.

For nearly a month I thus continued to play the part of a talking-doll, giving utterance in my sleep to nonsense of which upon awaking I was compelled to take the responsibility. My science one day astonished even myself. Madame de Montbreton having on her finger a little pimple, which she could not succeed in removing, applied for advice to her adept; and I prescribed an ointment compounded of alum and mercury. Regardless of the entreaties of her husband who decried its imprudence, and of mine to have the sage nostrum submitted to the doctor, she persisted in trying the somnambulist remedy—but to this day I am ignorant with what result.

All this, which in my ill health had at first, in giving me pace, afforded amusement to others, soon became matter of serious anxiety. There was a mystery in it, which I could not fathom; my words, which I knew to be oftener false than true, were of a nature to oppose in me the blind faith that sets at naught reason and reflection; and my respect for the dear magnetizer's character would not suffer me to regard the whole affair as a plot. I talked the matter over with Lalo, who was philosophically sceptical, but she was unable to obtain leave to see me when magnetised, although I sanctioned her wish.

My incredulity was not unnoticed by Madame de Montbreton; but to conquer it all her attempts were vain; her arguments fell cold on my ear, and with all the influence she usually possessed over me, on this subject she failed to bring conviction to my mind.

A singular circumstance almost shook my disbelief. The Board of Woods and Forests having a lawsuit with M. Charpentier, I gathered, from a word or two dropped by a

keeper and accidentally overheard by me, that he was unfairly dealt by; and, without pausing to reflect, I wrote to M. Charpentier to denounce the conspiracy directed against him, and to inform him how to defeat it. Feeling that the step I had taken would be blamed if known, I carefully concealed it. What, therefore, was my astonishment when Madame de Montbreton informed me that I had told her all in a fit of somnambulic confidence,—that I had repeated to her my letter word for word! Shocked and alarmed, I was unable to join in the laugh raised at my involuntary indiscretion, and I refused my consent to further experiments.

I have, however, since learnt that my secret was not miraculously divulged by me in my sleep, but that it was simply discovered in my escrutoire, where I had deposited it, as I thought, in safety.

One evening, when we were reading aloud a new vaudeville of Scribe's, the conversation becoming theatrical, nothing would do but we must get up a play. A piece was chosen and cast in a trice, and the parts copied out and distributed. Vaudeville-music, dresses, and properties, were immediately put into requisition; and all became bustle and excitement. Madame de Montbreton, who had played in noble company at private theatricals, undertook the most difficult parts, and became our prima donna; I was entrusted with the boarding-school misses and innocently-witty wards, with a green apron, and a rose over my ear; M. de Montesquiou was to play the noble fathers, Auguste de Montaigu to discharge the light comedy characters, and Fernand was our walking gentleman.

Several days were devoted to the conning of our parts. Those who were quick at study made short work of it, while the dull sate apart holding their foreheads. Madame de Montbreton swung in her hammock; while I, generally not far from her, was perched on the top step of a gymnastic ladder, intent on my part, and my head in the clouds. In the evenings, which were devoted to rehearsal, we laughingly criticised one another's droll declamation and awkward attempts at stage gesticulation; and nothing could be more original and diverting than these family amateur theatricals.

We were on the eve of our first performance; the stage was prepared, our dresses finished, the neighbours bidden to applaud,—when I received a letter from my aunt Garat, recalling me immediately to Paris, where my uncle De Martens awaited my arrival with a suitor for my hand! The news and the order to depart filled me with consternation.

"Good heavens, Marie! whatever has happened?" cried Madame de Montbreton, who stood by while I read my letter."

"A husband has been found for me, madam—that's all," I replied; and proceeded to inform her of my sudden recall to Paris by my aunt.

A consultation followed, and on the very stage where we finished our rehearsal, we wrote word to my aunt that in order not to disappoint my friends of long-anticipated pleasure, my expected arrival would be deferred one day; and that I would set out the next night, immediately after the play was over.

Wearied by my part and my conflicting emotions, stunned by the applause, I hastened from the stage into the carriage, crowned with laurels and laden with the floral spoils of my triumph; and reached Paris still intoxicated with my success and the perfume of my bouquets.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

My aunt received me rather coolly. She had left the country and her friends for the appointed interview; and my day's delay had compelled the young man, who was away from his business, to defer a further appointment until the end of the week. Some information respecting him was accorded me; and I heard that he was rich, handsome, twenty-six years old, and the son of a *maitre de poste*, living a short distance from Paris. I was far from sharing the general enthusiasm. Resigned to a marriage of convenience, of course I could not object to the

article of fortune; but while handsome features were not indifferent to me, my pride revolted from an alliance with a *maitre de poste*. I had always regarded the business as conducted by enriched vulgar contractors, versed in arithmetic, but ignorant of good breeding; vain, purse-proud, and silly.

I ventured to make a remark or two to that effect; and they were received with displeasure. I was given to understand, that without beauty or fortune I could aspire to no better match; and my aunt, in her anxiety to see me happily married and settled, forgot that she not only wounded my vanity, but also my heart, in making me suspect the maternal tenderness of her own.

The next day, M. de Martens rejoined us with mysterious looks; he had reflected on my objections, admitted their justice, and, upon reconsideration, offered me, instead of the posting-master, an iron-master. Unable to refrain from joining my aunt Garat in laughter, I asked him where he had discovered his mine of husbands. He appeared not to relish our jocoseness, replying, coldly, that he had made their acquaintance at a rich merchant's of his connexion. I had only known one iron-master, M. Muel; I knew him to be rich and educated, and that he passed alternately six months in Paris, and six in the Vosges. As I had been told that mining speculations conferred great local influence, my first impression was not unfavourable; and as the mania for discussing my prospects, and marrying me, was spreading amongst my relatives and friends, and submit I must to the common lot, I resolved this time seriously to examine and reflect, with the firm intention of not shrinking from the ordeal, if all the requisite conditions should unite.

M. de Martens was not in possession of positive information; he feared that the distance from Paris would frighten me, and my aunt Garat also shrank from the thoughts of this separation, which she regarded as little short of exile. The matter, however, did not trouble me: I had been at Strasbourg, and knew that civilization extended even a hundred leagues from Paris. Fortune annihilated distance; and as for country life, my head was still so filled with the pleasures of Corcy, that

I did not fear it; and without anticipating that my future life would be so brilliant and diversified, I yet hoped that it would be peaceful, unrestrained, and hospitable.

More precise information followed. M. Lafarge was twenty-eight years of age, of honourable family, of acknowledged good character, great intelligence, and desirous of carrying out his speculations to the utmost extent. He was owner of one of the finest estates in Limousin, with extensive smelting-works and furnaces; he possessed two hundred thousand francs in land and vested capital, secured from the risk of his speculations, and received a large income from his iron-works. I was also told that he had been six months in Paris on business and pleasure; that his wish was to return home with an educated wife to enliven him by her wit and talents; that he had no relatives in Paris; but that his friends, M. Gauthier, the deputy from Uzerche, and General Petit, a peer of France, would vouch for his position and character.

My aunt almost forgot the hundred leagues that were to separate us, as she listened to the statement of M. Lafarge's circumstances, and I likewise was mightily pleased. As his person was not described, I had misgivings on that head; but on recalling to mind all the husbands of my acquaintance, I could remember so few handsome among the number, that I concluded a fatality prevented the alliance in the same husband of good looks *and* fortune.

It became necessary so to arrange a first interview, that a possible objection on either part might be free and unembarrassing; so it was settled to take place in public, at Musard's concert, in the Rue Vivienne. M. de Martens was to join us there accidentally, and introduce M. Lafarge as a friend; a conversation would ensue; and the impressions left by the meeting were to be made mutually known the next day.

My aunt was so delighted with my smiling prospects—she predicted so much happiness, such rich wedding-presents, and so charming a *trousseau*,—that I tranquilly allowed myself to indulge these golden dreams of the future; and, obedient this time to the dictates of common

sense and the world's realities, fancied myself under the sway of reason, because not carried away by my feelings.

I saw M. Lafarge for the first time on a Wednesday. The weather was most lovely, the sky cloudless; and no presentiment of the dark future disturbed my mind.

Ye plaintive breezes, that sometimes murmur in unison with the sighing of the wretched in this world, why awakened your voices no echo in my heart? Oh, ye clouds! coursers of the tempest, why sent ye no warning thunderbolt to rouse me from my sleep! no lightnings to disclose the abyss yawning at my feet! And ye lovely stars! that shone upon me from your azure thrones, could ye send no pale and prophetic messenger of futurity, in falling, to presage to the unhappy Marie her impending perdition!

My aunt had dressed me in the colours that became me best. Strauss's exhilarating waltzes, played by the orchestra, lit up my eyes with recollections of balls and pleasure. And thus seen to advantage by M. Lafarge on his presentation, I felt in an instant that his impression was favourable.

Not equally favourable was mine; for M. Lafarge was extremely ugly. His form and features were the most business-looking conceivable. He spoke to me a good deal, but the noisy harmony of the orchestra drowned his words; and I retired for the night with my head filled with German dances, and forgetful of the important interview.

The first thing the following morning the natural consequence followed. I was summoned by my aunt, whom I found engaged perusing in exultation a heap of letters of all forms and sizes. She told me that I had made a conquest of M. Lafarge, that he was desperately in love, that he had written to ask me in marriage, and to transmit the most minute information respecting his fortune, position, and character. The letters seemed dictated by real affection; while the honourable signatures of the writers would not permit a suspicion of exaggeration. Letters written in order to satisfy the solicitude of a family, and to govern a decision involving a young girl's

future prospects of happiness and well-being—letters promising her the protection of a man of honour and his friends' affection,—letters of such fearfully sacred importance should be deliberate and irrefutable, filled with truth and the most certain information: such letters it is not permitted to question.

One was from M. de Chauffailles, who, himself a large manufacturer, and the near relation of M. Lafarge, ought to have been the best and most trustworthy authority for his cousin's fortune and the prosperity of his trade.

Another, from M. de Chauveron, a solicitor, calling himself the business-agent and intimate friend of the family, contained a grandiloquent account of their fortune, of the iron-works, of the mansion at Glandier, and spoke in moving terms of the strong affection subsisting between M. Lafarge and all his relatives.

Other proprietors attested to the territorial value of the property. M. Boutin, the curé of Uzerche, guaranteed the morality of my lover; and in the heat of his knowledge of the human heart, sent for my edification a graceful picture in detail of the home where I was invited to forget my girlish dreams, and establish my new empire in abundance and joy.

All this was perfectly satisfactory,—yet my aunt asked more. She begged M. Doublat, a friend of hers, to apply directly to M. Gauthier; and the answer was an eulogium on M. Lafarge's moral character, and further satisfactory guarantees of his commercial position. Not stopping at vague general information, M. Gauthier professed to regard his intimate friend M. Lafarge in the light of a son; pronounced his fortune, from his own personal knowledge, to be one of the largest and stablest in Limousin: his mind he characterized as one of those vast intellectual capacities that live only for progression; and after warmly praising his generous heart and strict probity, "Most happy sir," he added, closing his dazzling enumeration, "will be the young lady who shall confide the happiness of her life to his keeping. Had I a daughter, I should be proud and happy to accept him for a son-in-law."

After the perusal of these letters and the flattering encomia they conveyed, I could no longer object to M. La-

farge on the score of ugliness, nor weigh this against the great and noble qualities ascribed to him. I wished to commence the serious business of life reasonably—to make a good match; and here was a rare opportunity, with, in addition, moral guarantees still more rare. I saw myself beloved by an excellent husband; an orphan, I found a second mother, whom, kind and affectionate as she was described, would claim my tenderest affection. Recluse from the fashionable world the greater part of the year, I should live for the friends who were to people my solitude, and blessed and beloved by the poor people who enriched us.

Although my aunt was pleased with my ideas, she yet resolved not to suffer me to hold long interviews with Dame Reason, to whom I was almost a stranger, and who, like all despots, exacts passive obedience. She kept me near her, spoke to me of my future mansion, of her intended visits, and of mine in return to Paris.

Madame Dulauloy, with whom I also spoke of my offer, was of opinion that it would be insanity not to accept it. In short, all conspired to persuade me to consent.

On the following Friday my aunt returned, if not a positive acceptance, at least a very favourable answer to M. Lafarge; and when I entered the drawing-room, they were going over a thousand little confidential details, which my presence did not interrupt.

"You must call upon my notary, sir, in order that you also may obtain the necessary information as to my niece's fortune," said my aunt.

"What information can I require, my dearest madam? I know Mademoiselle Marie; and the matter of fortune has become of no importance."

Deeply affected by this disinterestedness, I gratefully extended my hand to M. Lafarge; and he spoke to me of his mother, who would love me as a daughter: then he reverted to his future projects. He told me that Glandier was rather solitary, but that he saw a good deal of company; adding, that every spring, his business calling him to Paris, he should bring me to revisit my family.

The next day M. Lafarge brought in a statement of the product of his manufactory. The actual net income was

thirty-five thousand francs a year; which, when the completion of a road in progress of formation should supersede the expensive transit of the iron on the backs of mules, and my portion should have enabled him to extend his works, could not, he proved, amount to less than fifty thousand.

On Sunday M. Lafarge dined at the bank. He and my aunt wore looks of deep import when I entered the drawing-room; and they showed me the coloured plan of an extensive manufactory and works, headed by a view of a charming mansion, whose blue-slated roof harmonized admirably with the sky; while smooth gravelled terraces led to a garden symmetrically laid out, with box borders, and aristocratic fountains in full play. On a level with and exactly opposite the house was an orchard, on whose verdant turf reposed the Gothic remains of a Chartreux church; two long rows of poplars supplied the avenue; and a rivulet, that contributed the mite of its current to the water-power that moved the works, bounded the garden by its gracefully-winding and bubbling stream. The sight of this pretty spot eliciting from me a cry of joy, "'Tis your future home," said my aunt, kissing me, and giving M. Lafarge my hand: "it is your own, indeed; for, without consulting you, we have hastened the tedious preliminaries of the marriage, and the banns have been published this morning."

A slight tremor shook me at this; I was uncertain whether to smile or weep, when, to calm me, my aunt adduced a thousand excellent reasons. M. Lafarge, she said, had been six months absent from his works, where his presence had become indespensable. I ought to know she continued, that nothing could be more disagreeable than the series of wearisome interviews, in which it was impossible to study each other's temper, but very easy to grow mutually tired. And, after adding that M. Lafarge, being proud of me, wished to show me at Pompadour races, which, attended by all the rank, wealth and fashion of several departments, were to take place on the 19th of August,—"Be merciful," she concluded, laughing: "he burns with love and impatience; I also am gasping for

breath in this scorching Paris, to which I am only returned to see you married: so restore us to life and to the country as speedily as possible."

The wedding-presents were next to be considered. M. Lafarge wishing to give me whatever money could buy, and my aunt exacting that he should commit no extravagant follies, there ensued a contest between disinterestedness and generous prodigality, and wise foresight; while I, embarrassed by my awkward situation, seated myself at the piano. M. Lafarge shortly after rejoined me in ecstacies; he adored music, and was enchanted at finding I possessed that accomplishment. It was settled that he should present me with an excellent piano, which we were the next day to select at Pleyel's. Accordingly we went; and I had several instruments out of the sonorous apartments of the renowned maker sent to the bank for a day or two's trial.

When I had made choice of a very fine square piano, this new friend was at once despatched, that I might find it ready upon my arrival at Glandier.

The days succeeding the memorable and decisive Sunday evening were spent in a round of bustling preparations, which left me no time to reflect on the past, or calmly anticipate the future. The mornings were engrossed by Colliau's workwomen, trying and fitting my bride's clothes, discussing some articles of dress, and proposing others. My trousseau was, in truth, a charming one, and most complete; and having been chosen by Madame Dulauloy, exemplified her excellent taste and elegant simplicity. This research in the imperceptible articles of the toilette has always seemed to me a luxury almost of duty.

At noon my aunt claimed me until dinner-time. She had taken upon herself the exclusive charge of the selection of my *corbeille*, ransacking every shop, and persecuting legions of despairing milliners, to obtain the newest materials for dresses, unheard-of caps, and all-surpassing bonnets. Upon our return, when M. Lafarge had not accompanied us on our trifling rounds, he stayed two hours. Sometimes we went to the play, at others my aunt was away visiting; and of these latter occasions I availed

myself to write to my friends and make up my accounts. I rarely had a moment to devote to my piano.

Madame de Montbreton wrote to me every day, in order, she said, to make me sensible of all the happiness in store for me, and to prevent my old romantic notions from obtaining an ascendency in my mind. Madame de Leautaud was in Artois, at her sister-in-law's: in announcing to her my marriage, I asked her what I should do with the diamonds, it being impossible to sell them previously to my marriage, while my departure immediately after its solemnization would leave me no time to attend to them after. I also expressed my sorrow at being unable to serve her, and my ardent wish to return her jewels, and rid myself of the responsibility attending their possession. Marie promptly replied, that for her to keep her diamonds was more impracticable than ever; that M. de Leautaud's researches and suspicions went on increasing: she implored me, therefore, to carry them with me into the country, and keep them until the return of Mademoiselle Delvaux should offer us a means of making use of them;— "We may then," she added, "correspond without danger through her intervention; but until then we must use the utmost precaution." Then, to prevent the possibility of consequences, she recommended me to burn her letter directly I had read it, as the one in which I had spoken of my marriage and of the diamonds had already been destroyed by her. Further on, Madame de Leautaud requested me to make use of the pearls she had formerly destined for my wedding-present, but to speak vaguely to her sister of her gift, without explaining of what it consisted. Finally, she demanded a full account of the wedding, my trousseau, my jewels, my present happiness, and my dreams of the future.

Antonine was astounded by the intelligence of my marriage; on reflection she was at first gratified, and finally displeased at having been taken so late into my confidence. I had some difficulty to make her understand that in advising her of my changed prospects the day of publication of the banns, I had communicated a fact as soon as it had been made known to me, since three days before I had not even seen M. Lafarge.

The news was joyfully received at Villers-Hellon. My aunt and uncle Collard foresaw that the match would place me in a satisfactory position; and my old nurses and cottagers forgot the hundred-and-twenty leagues in thinking of the thirty-five thousand francs a year. They had one regret, which I shared with all my heart, namely, that my future blessing was not to be pronounced in the midst of them, in their church, and by their good curate.

Madame de Martens was at Enghien for her health. M. Lafarge paid her a day's visit; and my aunt shared the confidence of her husband, who incessantly vaunted of having insured my happiness. My resolution was fully approved by Madame de Montesquiou; who, coming to Paris to be present at her son's college-examination, expressed the tenderest wishes for my welfare, and lavished on me her motherly advice. Madame de Valence also, returning from the waters a few days before the signature of the contract, devoted them to the exercise of the same gentle and pious solicitude to which she had always accustomed me. Most deeply was I touched by these maternal attentions of my beloved grandmother's friend.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Amongst the purchases that engaged me most agreeably were the souvenirs that I determined to leave with the guides, companions, and friends of my youth. I requested, among my bridal gifts, a purse of fifty louis, on purpose to expend in these presents. How carefully I recalled to mind wishes expressed in my hearing, and how great my pleasure to be enabled to realize them! Living more in them than in myself, I wished to redouble my own joy in that of the objects of my affection. Antonine was ill, in an early stage of pregnancy; I surprised her by the gift of a set of baby-linen; and these diminutive habiliments were so pretty, so graceful, that one could almost behold in fancy, smiling from under

their laces and embroideries, the dear little stranger whom we expected and whom we caressed already in our dreams. My aunt Garat had, in selecting for me, strongly admired a magnificent English veil; on the nuptial morning she found it attached to her bonnet. I had the gold head of a walking-stick carved in the style of the middle ages for my uncle Garat. My aunt de Martens received a bracelet that she had admired; Hermine, the long-coveted box of colours, for which she was in future to sigh no more. To Madame de Montbreton I sent a Cabochon emerald ring, set in gold in the form of lion's clasped paws. To Madame de Leautaud, to gratify at once her known preference of the fashionable jewel-animals, and my own aversion for serpents, frogs, and other reptiles, imitated with repulsive fidelity, I sent a set of ornamental studs in the form of ladybirds,—a pretty insect, with purple spots on an orange ground, superstitiously regarded by the peasantry as a little prophet of good luck. I believe that my heart succeeded in its thousand affectionate arrangements. My nurses were not forgotten; and I did my best to leave happy hearts in my beloved Villers-Hellon, which in future I could only revisit in memory.

While occupied with the care of making these purchases and arrangements, I seldom saw M. Lafarge; and our rare meetings were always spent in making him admire his own handsome presents, and in thanking him for fresh proofs of his affection. Knowing that I loved the bath, he one morning brought me the plan of a bathing-room, to adjoin my apartment at Glandier, which was to be all ready for me on my arrival. Fearing that a journey by mail would affect my health, he made me a present of a charming britzka, in which to travel down post: and every morning he sent me bouquets of flowers. To my family he was all attention and respect; and even found kind words to address my nurse Lalo, who, with tears in her eyes, pronounced him "as good and generous as he was ugly." Sometimes, also, we conversed of our future life; and I asked him for an account of the house, the servants, his own tastes, and those of his mother. He informed me that my drawing-room, an extensive and well-lighted apartment, was furnished with red velvet,

hung with a few pictures, and richly carpeted; that the dining-room opened on the terrace, and that the offices were also on the ground-floor; that his favourite mare was black, and his horses all less remarkable for beauty than strength and vigour. He kept three or four men-servants; and it was arranged that I should select a good personal attendant to go down with us. My choice was soon made; for it had been settled years before, that upon my marriage, I should engage a young niece of Lalo's, clever and ready, as devoted and faithful as her aunt, strongly attached to me, and who had only entered service to qualify herself at some future time to enter mine.

While these confidential interviews with M. Lafarge were passing, my aunt received visiters in her other apartments, read, or wrote; and the only third person present was my pretty cousin Gabrielle, who listened to me with the greatest attention, and watched us with the vigilance of a duenna. If occasionally her rôle wearied her, on the other hand she was proud of it, and in running to her mother's lap, to hide a yawn, would say, "Don't be alarmed, mamma, I am at my post. But it's O so dull! It is not at all like M. de Sabatié and my elder sister, who used to kiss on the sly, in spite of me." Gabrielle had notwithstanding a profound respect for her future cousin, who was pleased with her prattle, and gave her sweetmeats. She generally sat upon his knees, and said aloud that "he was very fashionable."

One day, when I was out shopping with my aunt De Martens, while we were at a jeweller's selecting a setting for a set of turquoises, she made me buy a broad dead-gold ring, as a present for my future husband. I had engraven inside it simply a date—that of our first meeting, with our names. On our return, we told my aunt Garat of our purchase and its destination: she seemed uneasy. "My dear girl," said she, "you must not be romantic. I have to tell you a piece of news of no great importance, and which you must not suffer to disturb you. M. Lafarge is a widower."

This was a thunderbolt. From my earliest years I had had a horror of second marriages; I had persuaded myself, and had often said, that I could never bring myself to

marry a widower; and now, in three days my marriage-settlement was to be signed—in three short days I was to suceeed a buried bride mouldering in her shroud! My first impulse was to break off my engagement; my second, to burst into tears under the caresses and exhortations of my aunts. They could allow for surprise and vexation; but regarded as madness the rooted despair that would have prompted me to rescind my given promise. I knew not what to say in my excuse; my sorrow was not of the kind that can be expressed in language, and it weighed on my heart like a presentiment.

They had long been seated at table, when I was compelled to make my appearance in the dining-room with my red and swollen eyes. My antipathy had been disclosed to M. Lafarge; for I observed a few moments after, on looking up, that he was pale, silent, and overwhelmed. My aunt De Martens placed me by her side; and taking my hand in hers,—"Courage, my love," she whispered; "forgive our involuntary concealment, and be nobly forgetful: you see how your emotion agitates him." I softly called Gabrielle, and pulling from my finger the ring I had bought, I desired her to present it to her cousin from me. From that moment, I rarely regained my wonted tranquillity; yet I never attempted to put off the marriage: my word was sacred.

On Saturday, August the tenth, the notaries and the male members of the family met to settle the articles of the deed. Understanding nothing of the jargon of the law, I did not think myself bound to listen; and seated apart in the embrasure of a window, I conversed on literature with M. de Chanbine, my old notary, who was as idle as myself; his original mind having prompted him, some little time previously, to shake off the trammels of wills and marriage-settlements.

A moment's silence gave me notice that the bargain was concluded on both sides; and when the pen was placed in my hand to sign the deed in which two learned notaries had exhausted their ingenuity, the one to sell as dearly, and the other to buy as cheaply as possible, a poor creature made in God's image, I smiled with contempt, and a blush of shame mounted to my forehead.

Antonine still suffered from her pregnancy, and was lying in a long chair; I seated myself at her feet, and we were conversing of the joys of maternity which made its pains so sweet, when the news arrived, that, as it was impossible for us to be married at the mairie on Monday, we must repair thither immediately.

Without time to reflect, I was arrayed in the most charming dress in my trousseau, placed in a carriage, and conducted to a little dark room, where a registrar, confined in an iron cage like those in the Jardin des Plantes, grinned us a gracious welcome. He opened his large registers, in which the witnesses inscribed their names—not forgetting their titles. Then we were led through dark passages into a room hung with dirty drapery, surmounted by the Gallic cock, and there received by a big man with his throat enveloped in a tricoloured scarf, and holding in his hand an open code.

So far I had observed the drama performing around me; I had mechanically watched in a glass the waving of the feathers that shaded my bonnet; while occasional compliments, to which I was indifferent, were addressed to me: but when it became necessary to say "Yes"—when, shaking off my lethargy, I felt that I was giving away my life,—that the object of the contemptible legal farce was to imprison my thoughts and to fetter my affections and will, —tears, that to check would have choked me, found their way, and I sunk almost insensible into my sister's arms.

Borne into the air, new impressions rapidly succeeding each other recalled me from this painful crisis. My aunt Garat, wishing to distract my attention, determined that I should be left alone to enjoy my new state of independence; and saluting me as a wife, and free, placed me in a pretty little calash, and without permitting my sister or M. Lafarge to accompany me, told me to employ the rest of the day as I pleased.

I drove first to the flower-market; thence to St. Roch, where I offered up a short prayer; and finally to Madame de Valence, who had company, and was astonished to see me enter alone duly wrapped up in my cashmere. We stepped aside, and I imparted to her that I had been married an hour before; that my first moment of freedom I

bestowed upon her; and that I had obtained a promise for my marriage to be kept secret two days, in order to remain still single to the persons who would come in the evening to sign my contract,—above all, to be still a maiden to him whom the law had already made my lord and master. I thanked Madame de Valence a thousand times for the magnificent scarf she had sent me in the morning; and we had a long conversation. Delighted with my secret wedding, and my flight to her, she made me participate in her gaiety; and related with lively humour a dozen little incidents that had attended her own marriage.

I returned to the bank in the evening by the Champs Elysées. The weather was superb: crowds of elegantly-dressed promenaders thronged the avenues, and I determined to mix with them, for the first time in my life, alone and free, without being compelled to guide my steps by another's, and with no other protector than myself. Alighting with an elastic step, I was for a few moments pleased with my independence; but when I felt myself elbowed and jostled by the crowd, and surrounded by strange faces, I became afraid, and re-entered my calash, convinced that in this world woman needs a supporter, and can only live alone in deserts.

M. Lafarge presented to me, on my return, a magnificent bouquet of orange-flowers and magnolia. He continued all the evening affectionately attentive, and kindly forgetful of his rights, scarcely pressing my hand openly. There came many visiters: inquiring glances and all good wishes were directed to me; and for the last time I was a gay, careless, and happy girl. I would not wear any of the ornaments proper to my dignity: a muslin dress, and a few natural forget-me-nots in my hair, composed my toilette; and I danced till morning with a light heart and buoyant spirits, smiling upon my friends and him for whom I was about to leave them. I was so fatigued, that on retiring to my room I could scarcely undress; and slipping into bed in haste, I slept sweetly and profoundly till morning.

All day on Sunday I was sad and painfully occupied preparing for my departure. Antonine and my cousins assisted me to pack with care the nick-nacks of my cor-

beille and trousseau; but when our looks met, words of absence and regret rose to our lips, and scalding tears that we would have repressed forced their way, and the most trifling expressions were often broken by sobs.

My nurse Lalo, who wished to see to every thing, in order that I might miss her as little as possible, took snuff twenty times as she gave her instructions and advice to Clementine; and complained of a cold in her head, to account for her red eyes. Ursula in expressing her good wishes left me to imagine her grief.

My dear little room already wore an air of confusion and desertion; it was encumbered with bandboxes, trunks, and packages; a thick coat of dust had settled on the furniture and chimney-piece, like a mourning-veil, and my flowers lay withered in their overturned vases. I did not wish my maiden sanctuary to be seen in such a plight; so when M. Lafarge knocked at my door, I entreated him in pity not to enter in the midst of the confusion of packing. Disregarding my words, "The time for ceremony is past," said he, laughing, and opening the door; "and I enter in virtue of my marital prerogative." Seizing me rudely round the waist, he would have kissed me, but I repelled him impatiently, and made my escape into the drawing-room—where, finding myself alone, I burst into tears. My feelings were too painful to be described: and even now my heart bleeds at their remembrance.

Antonine presently came to seek me, bringing M. Lafarge, unhappy and repentant, to beg my pardon. I feebly spoke it; but my words did not come from my heart. There are in life wounds trifling in themselves, but tremendous in the consequences they foreshadow, and in the prophetic impression of which they are the tocsin, awakening in the soul echoes of misfortune which time alone has power to still.

In the evening it was settled that we should dine at Véry's and go afterwards to the Cirque Olympique, in the Champs Elysées. On the agile amazons, whom I had so often admired, the well-trained steeds and dexterous horsemen, I gazed on this occasion unmoved; but I was roused from my sorrowful abstraction by a scene passing near us. It was a Sunday evening, and the theatre was crowded;

we with difficulty obtained good seats, and the gentlemen of our party were obliged to stand at some little distance. Immediately before us was a sullen-looking and brutal old soldier; and next him a venerable silver-haired old man, protected apparently by a younger one, whose noble features, elegant figure, and profoundly sorrowful look, attracted my attention and sympathy. Attempting to take out his snuff-box, the *militaire* accidentally knocked off his venerable neighbour's hat.

"Pray, be careful sir," said the latter, meekly, no apology having been tendered.

"I have paid for ease and elbow-room—so stand clear," growled the old soldier.

"You are an insolent ruffian," cried the young man.

"And you a beardless coxcomb," was the rejoinder.

All eyes were fixed on the interlocutors, and silence was called for: the son led his father away, and both left the house. A short time afterwards, the young man returned; and coldly approaching the individual who had insulted him:

"You are a coward," whispered he, pinching his arm, "if you refuse to give me satisfaction."

"You shall have it willingly; but I give you fair warning that I never missed my man."

"Hold your tongue . . . to-morrow morning at eight . . . this card will inform you my name and address."

I turned pale at these words, which I distinctly overheard; the young man noticed it, thanked me by a look, and bowing, left the theatre.

I was too strongly affected to divert my thoughts from what had passed. "To-morrow," I reflected, "while I shall be surrounded by troops of happy friends, a father will be mourning the loss of his son; perhaps some maiden, betrothed like me, will be lamenting broken-hearted the death of her lover." . . . Suddenly, as he pulled out his handkerchief, the brutal aggressor accidentally dropped the fatal card he had received from his adversary. I hastily stooped and picked it up unperceived; but as I must have restored it if he had observed my movement, I put it into my mouth, and felt happy when I had reduced it to a state of pulp. The thought of the misery I had doubtless

averted restored a calmer tone to my mind; and the rest of the evening I enjoyed the consciousness of having performed a good action.

Exhausted by this day of emotions, I slept soundly till my old nurse entered my room with her cup of coffee. It had been the affectionate creature's habit from my childhood to make me taste the first spoonful of her breakfast, on pretence that it never seemed good until tasted by me. We felt on this occasion that we were performing this ceremony for the last time; that we must bid adieu to all our habits of childish but entire affection; and not seeking to conceal our tears, we let them flow unrestrained gazing at each other in speechless grief.

My aunt Garat presently entered my room. Thinking only of my toilette, and with just pride, she set to work upon the wreath of quivering orange-flowers that was to deck my hair, without noticing my agitation: fearful only of having my rich laces torn or crumpled, she was unapprehensive of any weakness on my part at the moment of departure. She had, in her idea, insured my future independence and comfort by this fortunate marriage, and was scarcely able to contain her joy. Antonine and my aunt De Martens arrived,—the one weeping, the other armed with gentle and consolatory advice: both contributed to soothe me.

My toilette completed, I knelt before my aunt De Martens; and having entwined the orange-flowers in my hair, and attached my white bridal-veil, she pronounced over me a solemn blessing, in my parents' name, and in those of all my absent and departed relatives. M. Lafarge entered; he appeared affected at witnessing my emotion, and kneeling before me, kissed my hands over and over again. Reconciled by these tokens of solicitude, I conjured him to be always confiding and indulgent; never to cease, above all, to love me,—remembering that I was an orphan and in need of all his tenderness, and that I should have no one but him to look to for affection. Kissing my forehead, he promised all; and then led me to the drawing-room, where we were awaited by my assembled friends. My tears soon ceased to flow, beneath the affected, indifferent, and scrutinizing looks that ac-

companied the storm of compliments and congratulations by which I was assailed. We were married at the church of the Petits Pères, after a very short service and a very dry homily. Unwilling to expose to the world the thoughts that agitated my heart, I hid my prayers and tears beneath my veil; and upon my return was pronounced a graceful and well-behaved bride.

After a long and animated breakfast, my aunts took me to the drawing-room, and closing the doors, began to initiate me into the fearful mysteries of my new duties. They said things that made me so blush and tremble, that to stop their disclosures I was tempted to tell them a fib, in declaring that I knew all they could tell me perfectly well. However, as I had only speculated on the nature of these important mysteries, I retained my illusive theory, which was innocently stupid, and my terrors, which were overpowering; fortifying my resolution to travel night and day without stopping until I reached Glandier.

My aunt's exhortation over, my bridesmaids entered to disrobe me; and, having removed the white wreath from my head-dress, I distributed its white flowers among my unwedded cousins, male and female, who were come to bless my marriage by their presence, prayers, and good wishes. One bud of my virgin wreath I secretly reserved for myself; and, depositing it in a little heart-shaped locket, a present from my mother, which I constantly wore, I kept it for a souvenir and talisman. This unspoken impulse of heart was blessed. Every other flower of my happy childhood and youth has withered, or been ruthlessly torn up and scattered: this one alone has escaped ravage, and remains still fresh and unfaded under the sanctified ægis of my adored patron-saint.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

M. Lafarge having some business to settle, and I arrangements to make, post-horses were ordered for four

o'clock. The last minutes were sorrowful and fleeting; and when the postilion's whip and the chimes of the Petits Pères gave the signal for departure, I almost fainted under my friends' last adieu. Meanwhile M. Lafarge came out; and the prolonged tortures of parting made us all ill. After two hours of this martyrdom of suspense, my shaken nerves so overcame me, that I was borne to Madame de Martens' bed, and the departure deferred till the following day.

My aunt Garat, to soften the sadness of the separation, went to the Opera to hear Dupré; my aunt De Martens and Antonine attempted to calm me; and my brother-in-law, who was informed confidentially that I was dying with fear, undertook to persuade M. Lafarge on this occasion to play the quiet part of sick-nurse.

All passed as we wished; my husband kissed me paternally on the forehead, and I enjoyed at least a few hours of repose.

At early dawn the next morning the horses' bells gave the signal of departure: it became necessary to tear myself from the home of my friends. After an abundance of tears and embraces, the last handshaking over, I passed through Paris so profoundly lost in my sorrow, that I did not bestow on it a last look. Soon, however, my tears were dried by the fresh morning breeze, which blew aside my veil, and shook the dust from the roadside elms. The birds carolled their matins; the pale east became purple, and the sun presently rising in golden majesty, all nature seemed to leap with joy at receiving the first kiss of her god.

I looked at first mechanically on the rich and cultivated landscape that was passing before my eyes; then listened unreflectingly to the song with which the postilion accompanied the cracking of his whip; and amused myself by watching the gallant looks he turned to Clementine, and his questions respecting her mistress, "who seemed over-afflicted for a bride." His words reminded me that I was married, and that my sorrow was unbecoming. Turning to M. Lafarge, I saw he was asleep, and I abandoned myself to reflection. Hitherto my life had been isolated in the midst of intimate but subordinate affections; now

it was to become the hope and joy of another life. I was in future to be well beloved: the feeling of uselessness that had weighed so heavily on my past, was to give place to a sentiment of duty; and my every word and action were to honour and please an excellent man who had bestowed on me his name. M. Lafarge seemed to adore me: I had not yet learned to love him, but was told that I soon should; and love in an interested match being only a tender esteem, I already felt in my heart all that such a sentiment could inspire. While reason thus whispered, imagination pictured to me the delicate and impassioned words that were to soothe me all this first day;—the first kiss on my forehead, the second, and then the third, which I might perhaps return; then the arm tenderly supporting my feeble frame, and a whispered "I love you;" to be succeeded, when the first star appeared, "Dearest, do you love me?"

A jolt awakened M. Lafarge; stretching his arms with a prolonged and sonorous yawn, he kissed me on both cheeks, and said, "Come, my dear, let us breakfast."

The carriage contained a cold fowl; seizing this by the two wings, M. Lafarge divided it, and offered me half: slightly disgusted, I declined the food. Thinking I was ill, he became anxious and very attentive; he poured out a glass of Bordeaux to restore me, and upon my declining that also, drank the whole bottle himself, "for himself and for me, who now made but one."

The smell of the provisions overpowered me, and I took Clementine's seat on the box. I amused myself by paying the postilions, making them talk by promising drink; and I tried above all to make light of the disagreeable realities the breakfast had awakened—soothing myself with the reflection that the meal was very rarely made in that primitive manner.

Towards noon I re-entered the carriage; and sought to converse on literary topics, theatricals, my beloved Villers-Hellon, and its fine forest. My words on this subject seemed to interest M. Lafarge; but my ignorance of the science of felling, and the price of timber and charcoal, soon silenced him; and pulling out his pocket-book, he became absorbed in calculations, and appeared not over pleased with his employment.

I tried to sleep; but the burning sun and piles of resplendent clouds accumulating in the east, and extending over us their dazzling mantle, induced a headache which rendered sleep impossible. Towards five, we reached Orleans. I could scarcely support myself, and asked for a bath, in hopes of obtaining a little refreshment and repose.

I had scarcely entered the room, when the door was violently shaken.

"Madame is bathing," said Clementine.

"I know it. Open the door."

"Sir, the bathing-room is open, and it is impossible for Madame to receive you."

"Madame is my wife; and to the devil with all ceremony."

"Pray do not speak so loud," I exclaimed, somewhat petulantly. "Wait ten minutes, and I shall be dressed."

"It is precisely because you are undressed that I want to come in now. Do you take me for a fool, or think that I am to be driven off for ever by your d——d Parisian modesty?"

Clementine trembled violenty, but continued to say firmly, "Surely Monsieur will be polite the first day!"

"Marie, I command you instantly to open the door, or I will break it open."

"Break it open, sir, if you please; but it will not be opened by me. Strength is powerless over my will: know that once for all."

After terrifying me by a storm of obscene imprecations that I should shudder to write, my husband departed in furious mood. I sunk insensible on the floor of the bath; my affectionate Clementine in alarm kissed my hand a thousand times to console me, and when I became calmer, left me in tears to seek M. Lafarge. In vain she attempted to persuade him of his error: but on her telling him that I was ill, and that a repetition of scenes of the kind would kill me, "So be it," he said; "I say no more for the present, but I will bring her to reason when we arrive at Glandier."

I met M. Lafarge without a word. He asked me at first whether my "airs" were over; and seeing that I

was unwell, he embraced me, and became kind and attentive as before. I was unable to eat at dinner; and having taken a cup of tea, I spent an hour in a balcony, feeling the horrors of the abyss yawning at my feet, but dreading the thought of coolly measuring its depth.

The motion of the carriage, the beauty of the sky sprinkled with countless stars, the stillness and balmy breath of the summer night, made me almost insensible to the bitterness of my reflections. I attributed to passion M. Lafarge's violence. His love was very different from that of which I had dreamed: I was terrified at the thought of it, but hopeful of conquering it by its own violence, and, in time, of tempering a passion to which I had given birth; and when I heard him snoring in the vehicle, I was consoled and almost without anger.

We arrived in the morning at Châteauroux, where M. Pontier, the special receiver of La Châtre awaited us. He was an uncle, and the first of my new family I had seen. I wished to please him, and to appear amiable and affectionate. I therefore chased the clouds which yet saddened my memory, by the power of my will and by excitement.

M. Pontier was about fifty years old; he had a frank and open countenance, his words were warm and hearty. He seemed delighted to see me, made his nephew a thousand compliments respecting me, and called me his child in so kind a voice, that I felt myself perfectly ready to love him. His wife was to accompany us to Glandier. She was no longer young, and was commencing that epoch of life when, without losing the pretension to youth, we assume the follies of another age: her spirit was caustic, overbearing, and subtle; yet whilst she remembred the honey of the lip, she unfortunately forgot to govern her eyes.

No one suffered from *ennui* near her, but it was at the expense of the heart the intellect was excited; and after a short walk arm-in-arm with M. Pontier, I understood he abandoned his wife to us with very little regret.

They gave us an excellent breakfast; and then it was necessary to think of departure. I had first, however, a few moments of unexpected amusement. Having entered, I know not why, my new aunt's chamber, I found her

reading the journal, whilst her husband was putting her hair in a swarm of papers.

"Follow my example," she said to me seriously; "there is no greater convenience than making of one's husband a lady's maid: M. Pontier dresses hair divinely, laces me astonishingly well, and no one knows better than he does to give grace to a bow, to make one's waist expressive, or to arrange the folds of a shawl."

At that instant the model-husband wished to place upon her neck a collerette, which was a little rumpled. Madame Pontier, observing the false pleats in it, said bitterly to M. Pontier, that "since the morning he might have found plenty of time to have touched it with the irons, and that, moreover, it was not the first time she had perceived his indifference. That the death of her father had left her in the depths of misery; for nothing remained that she could love, and that loved her, except a dog." This favourite dog was a little greyhound, which she installed along with us in the carriage. The animal took me treacherously into her friendship, and as I understood her to be my cousin in the heart of Madame Pontier, I generously sacrificed myself to the relationship, and became the little brute's couch.

Madame Pontier talked to me a great deal about literature; of the bad taste of Victor Hugo, in not worshipping Racine; of the madness of Alexandre Dumas; of the sublime grandeur of the poets of the empire; but more especially of Madame Sand's immorality, who wrote like *a cook*, and thought like a *fish-woman*. My dear aunt assured me that no decent saloon in La Châtre would receive *that woman;* that respectable females were ignorant even of her name; and that she herself had quarrelled with a sub-prefect (I believe), who wished to corrupt M. Pontier by lending him an infamous work called *Lélia*. I had the hardihood to own having read *Indiana*, and dared to express my admiration for the magic and power of the beautiful prose, splendid and elegant as a diamond hidden among rose-leaves.

She lifted her eyes to heaven, and astonished at so much perversity in one so young, relieved her mind at the expense of her family, whom she charitably made me acquainted with, by branding all her relatives with some

mortal sin; and heaping peccadilloes without number on cousins, nephews, second cousins, third cousins, &c. &c. &c.

M. Lafarge being on the box, my aunt endeavoured to gain my confidence. After having rapped at the door of my vanity with a thousand exaggerated compliments, she told me I must have a great deal of courage to quit Paris; that I should soon be the slave of *ennui;* and that it was a moral murder to bury me at Glandier in company with a husband as coarse as his iron, and a mother-in-law who possessed neither ideas nor education.

I was annoyed by the part of victim which she would have had me sustain. I assured her I had a taste for solitude; that I esteemed my husband deeply; and that it would be a part of my pride to become agreeable and necessary to him. I told her also, that I hoped, nay, was even certain, of returning to the bosom of my friends, to whom both the promise and the business of M. Lafarge would yearly restore me.

We traversed a cultivated and varied country. I expressed to Madame Pontier my admiration for the beauties of the southern part of France, which to me would be novel, and spoke to her gaily of the mountains, valleys, and ruins over which I was about to establish my empire.

When night brought M. Lafarge into the carriage, his aunt jested with him on the wandering commencement of his honeymoon.

He wished to answer like a conqueror; but having the bad taste to plead the cause of his love with coarse and noisy kisses, I had my skin rubbed off by that public mark of possession, and repulsed him at first gently, and afterwards with impatience.

Madame Pontier laughed at my prudery, so removed from the primitive manners of those I was about to mix with; and told me that one of the pleasantest customs of Limousin was to invade the nuptial-chamber on the marriage night, in order to carry to the newly married pair a cup of spiced wine, of which they must partake in bed. The wit of the men most esteemed in society displays itself here by the deeper or brighter crimson their jests can bring to the brow of the youthful spouse, by the amount of stifled laughter they can call from the lips of

other women, anxious to see the modesty of the bride profaned, whom they envied perhaps in the morning.

"Oh, you will not escape, my lovely niece; and I constitute myself the champion of that merry tradition of olden time," said Madame Pontier, in conclusion.

"I conjure you not to do this, Madame; I cannot support so bitter a jest; and never will I pardon a husband who suffers me to be soiled by that humiliating and sinful mirth."

I concealed my face in my hands, and pretended a desire for sleep, to relieve myself from my sad impressions. I felt myself tremble at the recital of such brutal customs. The Orleans scene passed before my affrighted imagination—I more than feared, I was disgusted. I looked towards the heavens, whose lovely stars appeared to protect me; and counted the hours which yet separated me from a new night, which was, alas, starless to me.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

We were surprised at Masseré by a fearful storm. To the thunder which rolled deafening over our heads succeeded a thick and continuous rain. Gray clouds coursed along the heavens, and seemed to rest their vapoury masses heavily upon the earth. Shut up in our carriage, we only saw the white thread of the route winding sadly before us, the poor panting horses and the jacketed postillion, who urged the jaded animals to face the rage of the tempest with a hoarse and savage cry.

At eight in the morning they pointed me out some black buildings at Uzerche, which formed the faubourg of Ste. Eulalie. Then we traversed a road against the side of which were dashed the waves of the Vézère; and we descended at a wretched inn, for the sake of avoiding a meeting with a part of the family with which I was in duty bound to be embroiled, and we dwelt in the only passable house in the town. Madame Pontier left me for the purpose of making a few visits; and M. Lafarge informed me that the carriage being broken, we must re-

main here some hours. M. Buffière, my brother-in-law, who waited for us, gave me two loud kisses of welcome. A little cousin of sixteen also came to inscribe his relationship upon my cheeks. At last they left me alone, every one being more inclined to make a wonder of my carriage, than to give me a gracious reception. I was ill and fatigued—I wished to lie down: a fetid exhalation drove me from the alcove in which I had sought repose. I then placed a chair to the middle of the chamber, to remove myself as much as possible from the foul walls and furniture surrounding me, while Clementine went to order me a cup of tea.

After waiting an hour, I was attended to. They possessed no tea-pot; a huge water-jug, closed by a paper cover, had ingeniously replaced it; while a few leaves of Swiss herb-tea floating in the ocean that filled the jug-ular tea-pot, ursurped the name and functions of the Chinese, shrub, itself unknown to the inhabitants of Limousin. I opened my window; the rain had ceased, but the fog still enveloped nature and heaven. Suddenly the bells began, lively, joyous, and animated. Every house opened to allow the good souls to pass, faithful to the call. It was the August feast of our lady, my holy patroness. I covered myself in my mantilla, and wished to go forth, that I might carry my grief to the foot of her altar.

"That is impossible," said M. Lafarge, whom I had sent for to inform of my intention; "you will be the butt of every look, the object of indecent jests and raillery."

"What matters that? I am above such ridiculous considerations."

"I tell you, you must not go; I do not wish to be seen by my family; they are jealous of my marriage. Curiosity must bring them to you; and they must only see you dressed in your best."

"You flatter my poor person. Well, since you *insist*, I will not go to mass."

"Do not pout, puss. It is because I love you, that I wish you to dazzle them with your jewels, your shawls, &c. &c."

I remained alone; Clementine came sadly near me, saying, with a broken voice, as she took my hand, "I wish you a pleasant *fête*.'

I did not possess sufficient strength to reply to the good girl; and, resting my head on my hands, burst into tears. How much bitterness was there in the lovely and joyous memories that *fête* of the virgin awoke within me! In other days, I had opened my eyes under the kisses and presents of all my family. I wore a pure white dress, the livery of the Virgin; and with the flowers given me by my grandfather, I went to our little church trusting and happy. On coming out from mass, the peasants brought me good wishes and flowers; all the women embraced me; and I embraced all the little children. Then the men went to prolong their good wishes over some bottles of good wine; and the young girls, forgetting the harvest labour, ran under the shadowy lindens that they might dance in my honour. The evening reunited a few friends. I was the queen of the day: the flowers seemed to blow for me alone. My name, inscribed on the cakes, was repeated joyously in the saloon and in the servants' offices; and I lay down at night, fatigued with dancing, with kindness, and with pleasure.

Alas! to-day life opened anew. I was alone, isolated, without prayers, kindness, or friends. "My God," I cried, "have pity on me!"

It was nearly eleven when the carriage was in a condition to start from Uzerche. I was in haste to leave the town, and chase my dark thoughts away with the sight of my pretty little castle; to find, in short, a family which would forget envy in kindness and in love. We stopped one hour at Vigeois with a cousin of M. Lafarge. I was so desirous to arrive at *my own home*, that I allowed him to embrace me, and took some fruit mechanically, without being yet aroused from my mournful impressions. They brought some saddled horses to the door. I was weary and bruised, and wished to finish the journey in the carriage, although they cried out at the imprudence, and that it was impossible to cross in a chaise the savage country which separated us from Glandier.

Not a ray of sun had smiled from behind the clouds since the morning storm. The trees still drooped with wet; and the ploughed-up roads, which reduced to a walk the pace of the horses, threatened us with continual

and almost inevitable danger. After three hours of this dolorous travelling, we descended into a hollow. They showed me some smoky roofs, which emerged from the fog, and informed me that they belonged to the buildings of the forge; and at the end of a little avenue of poplars the carriage stopped.

I leapt from the carriage into the arms of two women. I walked up a long, dark, damp, and cold path. I mounted a little dirty stone staircase, clammy with the drops of rain that escaped from a broken roof. I then entered a large chamber, called the drawing-room, and fell in a chair, gazing wildly round me. My mother-in-law had taken one of my hands, and examined me with a censorious gaze. Madame Buffière, a little red, fresh-looking woman, in perpetual motion, loaded me with caresses and questions, and wished to draw me from the bitter stupefaction which she mistook for timidity. M. Lafarge came to seek us: he tried to seat me on his knees; and as I repulsed him with a positive refusal, he said aloud, laughing, that I only knew how to *recline in a tête-à-tête*. "Madame," he added, "you do not know how she loves me, that little *canne*. Come, my duck, own that you are devilishly fond of me." At the same time, to suit the action to the word, he clasped my waist, pinched my nose, and embraced me.

My pride revolted at these words and actions, and I felt myself bursting with indignation as I listened to the endearing names, which classified me so politely with so many animals. No longer able to support this torture, I pretended excessive fatigue, letters to write, and retired to my chamber, where I locked myself in with Clementine.

My chamber, as large as the drawing-room, was wholly unfurnished: two beds, four chairs, hermit-like, occupied its vast solitude. I asked for an inkstand; they brought me a broken sweetmeat jar, in which a morsel of cotton was swimming in gray water, an old pen, and paper blue as the sky. Clementine wished to undress me—it was impossible for me to rest in my bed. I made her lie down near me—for it appeared to me that, even sleeping, that good creature would be my safeguard,—and I attempted to write: I could not command an idea—I was crushed by a terrible deceit! I recoiled at the idea of so soon causing so much sorrow to my friends—my tenderness

refused to tell them half my anguish—my pride so soon to play the part of victim. A hundred leagues separated us. Long days must pass ere I could bring them to my side. What would become of me during these long days? What should I do? My God! what should I do?

The gray colour of the heavens, darkening as night approached, added to the indignation which filled me at the deceit I suffered from—the greater and more repugnant fear of the nocturnal tête-à-tête, which I dreaded so much, and could no longer shun. I have never known hatred; but when my heart is wounded, I am powerless to master my indignation. At that moment I should have sickened if M. Lafarge had kissed my hand—in his arms I should have perished.

Suddenly my part was taken—I resolved to leave him—to fly to the end of the world; but especially not to pass the night within these dismal walls. That firm resolve rendered me a little calmer; but a means of executing it must yet be found. My imagination came to my aid: I resolved to obtain from M. Lafarge himself an order to depart—to wound his pride, his jealousy, and his honour; to render a reconciliation impossible—to tell him that I did not love him; to tell him that I loved another, and that, violating my recent oaths, I had seen his rival at Orleans and at Uzerche. In short, to tell him that all my married thoughts had been adulterous! Never could I have dared use that frightful word—never could I have repeated aloud so many humiliating lies; but the paper blushed not, and I trusted it, in all the bitterness of my heart, with the care of my deliverance.

Having written several pages, I wished to reperuse my letter: its energy appalled me, but I saw that I was saved. After reading it, they might kill me, but it was impossible to retain me, or to pardon. They came to call me. I placed the letter in the folds of my girdle. I was calm, because my will was strong; and I had the invincible courage of the warrior who has set fire to his vessels that he may hope alone for victory or death.

All the inhabitants of Glandier were present in the dining-room—the dinner was long: the evening even longer. The affectionate manner of Madame Lafarge, and the attentive care of Madame Buffière, added to my

sufferings. I tried to be amiable. I would have shown myself sensible of their kindness, during the last moments of our companionship. I was troubled and ashamed to return upon them so soon all the ill they had made me suffer during the three last days. Every time that I felt myself grow pale or weak—every time that the monotonous tone of the clock told me the dreaded hour drew nearer, I pressed the letter to my breast, and as I listened to the crackling of the paper, I seemed to hear it murmur, "I watch: fear nothing." Ten struck. M. Lafarge interrupted a business-conversation which had occupied all his attention for some hours, a conversation in *patois*, carried on more especially with his brother-in-law, but in which others of the family occasionally joined. I did not attempt to comprehend their strange idiom, but I could not avoid a profound feeling of sadness in listening to a tongue which was not that of the country.

"Come, let us to rest, my wife," said M. Lafarge, drawing me by the waist along with him.

"Give me, I conjure you, a few minutes to myself in my chamber," I answered.

"Another whim!" he replied; "but I yield to it, and for the last time."

I entered my chamber, summoned Clementine, and giving her the letter, begged her immediately to give it to M. Lafarge. At her return I drew the bolt, and cast myself sobbing in her arms.

The good girl, dreadfully frightened, addressed a thousand questions to me; and I had scarcely strength to explain to her my despair, the letter I had written, and my resolution to leave the same evening.

Clementine was terrified by this confidence, and supplicated me to endure all for a few days; to send for my family, and not expose myself to be killed by my husband in a moment of wrath.

They struck loudly on the door: I refused to open it; and, kneeling by my bed, I wept. A more energetic summons restored my self-possession. I told Clementine to leave me alone—to open the door; and retired into the embrasure of a window which was open. M. Lafarge entered in a fearful state. He addressed to me the most outrageous reproaches; told me that I should not leave

him ; that he needed a wife ; that he was not rich enough to purchase a mistress ; that, lawfully his, I should be his in fact. He wished to approach and seize me. I told him coldly that if he touched me I would leap from the window ; that I recognised in him the power to kill, but not to pollute me.

On seeing my paleness and energetic despair, he recoiled, and called his mother and sister, who were in the neighbouring chamber. They surrounded me, weeping ; prayed me to pity their poor Charles, for the sake of their honour and their happiness, which I was about to destroy. M. Lafarge also cast himself at my knees ; and my courage, firm enough to contend with injuries, softened into tears at the voice of their sorrow and their prayers.

I answered, that I could easily pardon the odious lie of which I had been the victim—that without regret I abandoned all my fortune—that I knew how to keep the name I had taken pure and honourable,—but that I should never possess the courage to remain among them ; that I wished to fly, and, if they detained me, I should know how to die.

My sister-in-law took me in her arms, and loaded me with caresses and questions. I related to her a few words from the scene at Orleans, and of all which had chilled me : I allowed her to imagine how much I dreaded the first evening of my arrival, and what terrors I had felt. She drew her brother into a corner of the chamber, and spoke warmly with him. Madame Lafarge came in turn to attempt to calm me : she promised to love me, assured me that she was proud of me, and that she would use the most maternal and affectionate attention to her daughter Marie. She entreated me to pardon her son, who, loving me to distraction, had deceived me to avoid the despair of losing me : lastly, to console me, she tried other means ; she assured me that the country, which appeared so sadly gloomy under the wet torrents of the storm, was rich, gay, and animated on a fine day. She told me also that I should be the absolute mistress, and alter my new dwelling at will, according to my tastes and habits.

M. Lafarge returned near us now with his sister. He was already more calm ; he took my hand and kissed it, weeping. I abandoned it to him, and after some minutes' silence, begged him to forget the injury I had done him

—to take my fortune, but still, beyond all, to allow me to leave him. He explained to me that I could not dispose of my dowry without the consent of my family; implored me to wait for two or three days; and promised me not to attempt detaining me, if he failed to obtain his pardon, to prove to me his love, and to make me happy. I could not resist so many prayers and tears, and consented to remain some days with him as a *sister*. M. Lafarge assured me my wishes should be commands to him; that my kindness made him but too happy: while Mdme. Buffière said, laughingly,

"Be tranquil, my little sister: if he is not modest, we will protect you. Would you like that I should sleep in your room?"

I thanked Madame Buffière, and made them put Clementine's bed in my chamber. This violent and stormy scene had so grievously disturbed me that I felt exceedingly unwell. I remained more than an hour without consciousness, and suffered until morning the most painful nervous spasms. My new family would not quit me; they feared I had taken poison; but at length, on day breaking, seeing I was suffering from fatigue alone, they left me to myself, and I slept heavily until the dazzling rays of an August sun opened my eyes to life—late enough in the morning.

When I arose, they told me M. Lafarge was too ill to quit his chamber. I sent Clementine to inquire after him; then I dressed myself, and was led down to breakfast. The company of the preceeding evening was increased by the addition of a friend of the family—an old white-haired advocate, whose manners were gallant and attentive; his language was slow, refined, and pure. Sad and preoccupied, I answered coldly enough to his politeness, until, after a short walk—during which his conversation was kind, various, and displayed an evident desire of pleasing me,—I forgot myself a little, and became animated enough to answer him.

I found in M. de Chauveron mind and good sense, veiled, however, under forms so sufficiently stamped with the majesty of the bar as to become rather absurd. Did he speak of music, it was with an imposing solemnity; if he perpetrated a compliment, it was done with an austere gravity

worthy a funeral oration. To sum up all, he wished you good morning eloquently, and asked for a glass of water with the most seductive persuasion. After his departure, I was presented to M. Pontier, a physician of Uzerche, and uncle to M. Lafarge. He was a man of about forty, with a noble and intelligent countenance, whose burning and passionate glance seemed excited and unhappy under the mantle of snowy hair which shaded his brow. Scarcely had he pressed my hand, and ere we had yet exchanged words, I knew that he was a friend, and my heart had adopted him. He made me visit the ruins; talked to me like a poet of their origin, their history, and their legends; drew me a touching picture of the love awaiting me in my new family; and spoke to me much of the happiness which I perhaps might not enjoy, but which I was destined to diffuse around me. I unhesitatingly interrogated M. Pontier as to the heart and character of his nephew. He answered with perfect candour, that M. Lafarge was uncultivated, and rude as his native hills; that all his studies had been directed with views of utility and to labour; that he had no talents, but much good sense; and that it would be most easy to overcome by the heart his positive and material habits. M. Pontier assured me that M. Lafarge already loved me beyond every thing, and that nothing would be impossible to him which might enable him to gain my affection. Some of the sadnesses of my soul had involuntarily risen to my lips. M. Pontier knew how to quell my fears. He pointed out to me my future life, surrounded by its duties, with his energy, his imagination, mournful, yet pleasing, until, in returning to the house, I promised him my friendship, and felt myself strengthened by the support, protection, and tenderness which he had pledged to me, and which I had accepted.

After having felt his patient's pulse, M. Pontier prescribed to him my presence as a calming potion, and conducted me to his room. M. Lafarge showed himself so grateful for my visit, that I felt recompensed for the effort it had required.

He asked me if I had been from the house, and had yet seen the forge. I told him that I had admired the ruins, and several beautiful places near them; but that I deferred visiting the foundry until his convalescence should enable

him to give all the information indispensable to my ignorance.

During the remainder of the day I was calm, and almost forgot the last evening's frightful despair. All around me seemed to possess an oblivious charm. A smile on my lips carried joy to every eye; and without attempting to account for it, I felt myself happy in being the centre in which originated those various expressions of hope and affection. As she undressed me, Clementine told me that M. Lafarge had called her into his chamber, to tell her that he could not exist without me; that he wished to keep me by surrounding me with care and kindness; and that he applied to her to learn my tastes and my habits. After a long conversation, he charged her to tell me that I was mistress there, and might model the house as I chose—nay, even build another if this could not be made sufficiently elegant, —and that the necessary workmen waited for my orders but to obey them. M. Lafarge had learned from Clementine that the most simple and necessary articles of the toilette were wanting in my apartment; he despatched an express to Uzerche, to bring them for me: he also told me that he would immediately send to Paris, and request my aunt Garat to secure me a good footman, in order that I should not suffer from the language and mal-address of the servants of the country.

CHAPTER XL.

When I rose on the morrow, the heavens were so blue, and the August breeze so warmly fragrant, that I felt less sad, and longed to spring out bareheaded under the azure canopy, that I might make acquaintance with the rustic nature surrounding me. M. Lafarge, too, was quite recovered; he led me to a small boat, which he unmoored, and after a thousand windings in the midst of lovely meadows, the little stream led us to the foot of the forge.

The workmen, warned to expect our visit, received us

with a large bouquet of wild-flowers, and a welcome as cordial, noisy, and expressive as their idiomatic *patois ;*—they appeared well satisfied with their new mistress, and repeated, with many congratulations, that they found me *proud* and *pleasant*—that is to say, amiable and pretty.

I wished to see and understand every thing. M. Lafarge, enchanted, gave me many interesting details respecting the machines, the melting, the casting, and the forging of the iron. His language, embarrassed and incorrect in the drawing-room, became lively, animated, and engaging, in his little sombre kingdom. He now appeared to me well instructed, and enthusiastic in his pursuit—not confining himself to the narrow boundaries of routine, but understanding the necessities and pleasures of improvement and progress. It was the hour of dinner in the forge; an immense copper, which was boiling on some heated scoria, was borne into the middle of the room, and one of the youngest workmen, who gaily brandished over his head a huge ladle, attribute of his function, poured out a foaming pottage of lard and vegetables into plates filled with slices of black bread.

I begged M. Lafarge to add a few bottles of wine and some fruit to that coarse and frugal repast, and was curious enough to taste some of this Spartan broth, which I found excellent, greatly to the delight of these honest men, who laughed loudly at the compliments I paid their cook. I then got them to fill my glass at the spring which murmured near, and drinking to their health as they drank to mine, I promised them, if I was destined to remain among their mountains, to care for and love them well. The enthusiasm of these good iron-founders knew no bounds ; they emptied their bottles with hurras, placed a coronet of leaves round my bonnet, and escorted me in triumph as far as the house.

In the court I found the peasants, who had fixed a May-tree there, covered with garlands of flowers and streamers of the national colours. They joined the workmen in congratulating me, and fired a volley from their fowling-pieces, which woke every echo in the ruins; after which they danced a *bourrée* around their tree. I was much amused with the grotesque and heavy movements of that Limousine dance, as well as with the

singular figure of the musician, resting against a tree, and blowing with all his might in a primitive bagpipe; and I forgot for a while what I had suffered, in the contact of this lively and dancing gaiety which surrounded me.

I entered the drawing-room as night came on; and the sight of this sad and vast apartment, which would have chilled the least susceptible woman, as I cast my eyes round it, restored all my terrors. There was a living vulgarity in it, which threatened to infect your whole person and all your thoughts. The walls were covered with a paper whose sickly colour was meant not to rejoice the eye, but to conceal more easily the damages and injuries of time. An alcove ornamented with drapery of red calico bordered with yellow cotton fringe, faced two windows similarly furnished; then there was a chest of drawers of walnut-tree wood, on the top of which was a piece of carpeting, proud enough of the new dignity that had lifted it from the earth, and representing the touching history of two doves swooning in ecstacy, and bound together by a love-knot azure as heaven. The chimney-piece was ornamented with five monstrous oranges; two beautiful candles, whose unpolluted wicks attested their virgin freedom from use; and a night-lamp, whereon Adam and Eve embraced fraternally—sinless, but, alas! leafless too. To these we must add the loves of a fair Greek and fierce Albanian—a specimen of the fine arts much admired by the connoisseurs of the neighbourhood; and two couches in red Utrecht velvet, with some straw-bottomed chairs which ran round the walls. There were also two doors of wood, and two others glazed.

M. Lafarge read my feelings in my face, and immediately spoke of improvements, plans, and projects. At first I remained inattentive and silent; then, thinking that to listen would bind me to nothing, and wishing to balance the pleasant day he had given me by a little good behaviour, I allowed him to go on creating around me. I advised him to turn the saloon itself into a bedchamber, with closets for the bath and the toilette; to turn the horrid entry-hall into a vaulted gallery, lighted by agreeable and elegant ogive windows, and to pave it with white flagstones. The desert without doors and windows,

which they called a kitchen, had sufficiently beautiful proportions to metamorphose admirably into a Gothic saloon, to be ornamented with sculptured cornices, massive portals, and sombre hangings. To the right, several little rooms would unite themselves into one nice dining-room; to the left, one would have a study, in which might be found, to while away the solitary hours, pens, books, and a piano. My mother-in-law listened with an air of stupefaction to these revolutionary plans, and seemed to apprehend that I might be a little mad. Madame Buffière, who wished to approve them, asked if the young Parisian dames were all so learned in house-architecture. As for Madame Pontier, she caressed her dog with a bitter smile, and appeared to me to grow every moment more odious.

The Pompadour races were to take place on the morrow; they proposed my going thither, but I was too fatigued; and I did not wish to appear in the world supported on the arm I had not yet accepted as that of my protector: I consequently expressed my wish to remain at Glandier. They appeared to approve of my decision. My sister-in-law went to Pompadour with one of her cousins. I insisted that M. Lafarge should accompany them, and remained at home in freedom, at least in all appearance. My piano arrived from Uzerche during those hours of liberty. I had it unpacked, remounted, and placed in the drawing-room; and I experienced a lively satisfaction on finding its sonorous and brilliant notes resound as harmoniously after the jolting of a hundred leagues, as they had done at the moment of its departure. My cases had also arrived, and Mesdames Lafarge and Pontier, who kept me in sight, were thunderstruck at all they contained.

Many persons came to honour our hospitality after the races. Clementine, ever eager to see me elegant and admired, made me wear a dress of white muslin, fastened my hair with long pins of gold, and placed in it a sprig of purple fox-glove. When M. Lafarge saw me thus, he was enchanted with my toilette, quite proud to present me to his friends, and quite delighted to see his morning bouquet in my hair; while I, touched by his joy and grati-

tude, permitted him to kiss the forehead which he had adorned. After this I every day received the mountain-flowers, and every evening used them in my toilette for dinner.

This first *soirée* was sufficiently animated: I endeavoured to make myself agreeable, and to be attentive to *his* guests. I played quadrilles—I played even the *bourrées* which I had heard the evening before; the company insisted on dancing them, and to me they now appeared far less pretty, executed with arms arranged by pretension, and gestures inanimate, because restrained. They proposed a *déjeuner champêtre* for the next day. Madame Buffière undertook its arrangements, on the bank of the river, a short distance from Glandier. The weather was fine, but rather stormy, and the guests very gay, of that noisy gaiety which makes wit by dint of foolery, and which stuns and painfully saddens those who are unable to share in it. There were not enough plates, in consequence of which hands were adroitly called into operation. Glasses were scarce, but this was an enjoyment discreetly managed—they made such pretty commentaries on thoughts discovered by the margin of the indiscreet crystal which your own lips and those of a neighbour had touched.

An amiable youth concealed a *snail* in his lady's *beignet*, and great cries and applause followed the jest. Another, in a fit of distraction, consumed the whole stock of wine provided for dessert: this joke was decried as a bad one, and lengthened several faces, even feminine ones. A third placed a tart upon his head; and a fourth began singing a drinking song, whose chorus required, as an indispensable accompaniment, the shock of glasses and the shock of kisses, which met with great success amongst some cousins, who laughed under their veils, and blushed apparently at the obligation of embracing a little cousin of their own age. My sombre visage chilled the gaiety of M. Lafarge. He proposed to me that I should accompany him alone to visit a part of his property, whose chimneys were smoking not far beyond a chestnut-tree grove; and, under pretext of seeking a fresher spring, we stole away.

I ran over the rocks and through the bushes,—in order

more quickly to escape all eyes, more quickly to lose the sound of all laughter,—so energetically, that when I stopped, certain of having escaped them, I amused myself with M. Lafarge, in mocking at our desperate flight.

Eight days passed in like manner. I received a few visits in the morning, and we took long walks, or made short excursions on the water.

In the evening I set myself at the piano, and had long, serious, and intimate conversations with M. Lafarge. I endeavoured to instil in him some anti-Limousine ideas, which I believed indispensable for every-day life; and especially a few sentiments, which were more indispensable still in that exchange of esteem and love which must be the base of all happiness in marriage.

A little after my arrival, I heard M. Buffière boast of having deceived two poor ironmongers, by selling one damaged goods, and by concealing from the other, who trusted to him, the true price of iron.

I was so astonished, so appalled by that vain dishonesty, which dared make a virtue of a baseness, that I spoke to M. Pontier, and told him that it would be impossible for me to remain a mute witness of like frauds; and more especially to do the honours of my table to the poor fools whose spoils would henceforth enrich me.

He approved of my sentiment, blamed what seemed blamable to me, and spoke of it to his nephew. M. Lafarge assured me that he did not support his brother-in-law in such conduct, and that the bad faith of the latter had been one of the causes of their commercial separation. He also promised me to have but one price, and to observe the most scrupulous veracity as to the qualities of his iron.

M. Pontier, who was the confidant of M. Lafarge, had meanwhile made him comprehend that the chamber of a wife should be a sanctuary, in which she alone should reign, and where she should be all-powerful. He told him that the mysteries of modesty were necessary to the existence of love; that delicacy of words, thoughts, and actions, alone could gain my confidence, my esteem, perhaps my affections. Clementine charged herself with reforming

the toilette and appearance of M. Lafarge. Knowing all my tastes, perhaps all my follies, she told him the colours I liked—made him wear a cravat which I preferred—and banished some flaring colours which were in very bad taste. M. Lafarge, following her advice, now shaved every day, attended to his hair and his dress, wore great gloves to the forge, and removed from my domestic life two insupportable calamities, which are of themselves enough to destroy all love,—slip-shod shoes and unattended nails. As for myself, in order to be agreeable to M. Lafarge, I tried to love all whom he loved. I took into my liking his sister's little girl, and even attempted to civilize her. She was a beautiful and wild child, of five years of age, and was the god-daughter of M. Lafarge. To wind up all, I procured a manual written for master-ironfounders, and gave myself up to the study of minerals and metals, the various systems of founding, casting, &c., &c. This soon made me learned enough to talk with an ironfounder without stopping at technicalities, and enabled me to talk with a vain assurance about bars, casting, rough metal, &c., &c.

However, I had not yet written to my family. I did not wish them to suffer from my first impressions; I dared not mention projects to them which I myself had not invincibly resolved on, and which fled on the wings of imagination far away before a fine morning, or a beautiful view, or a single touching word of love. I waited . . . . Accustomed from infancy to bury in my own bosom all my griefs, I never knew the selfish want of sympathy, the humiliation of seeking consolation in the pity of a friend. I know how to forget my sorrows to raise the cross which has fallen on *those of my heart ;* but in solitude and isolation alone do I find strength to bear my own cross to the foot of Calvary.

CHAPTER XLI.

One evening, after having been present at the casting of a font, I felt myself a little weary. M. Lafarge proposed to me to return by water. It was late: the silent earth slept under the whispers of a gentle wind, that passed through the tremulous trees, and lightly rocked the sleeping flowers, as it ravished from those lovely daughters of the sun their glorious perfumes. Occasionally a foolish grasshopper chirped out its joyous song, that woke a whole republic of austere ants. A frog, perhaps dying for love, breathed forth a grievous sigh; and then, on a sudden, a weak but vibrating note interrupted sighs and songs,—the nightingale commanded silence, that she might serenade the youngest rose whom she adored. In the heavens the stars glittered, and the moon smiled at her own beauty, as her pale and divine image glowed in the water beneath her. M. Lafarge pulled a few feeble and distant strokes with the oar. . . . He encircled me with one arm, for I was sitting at the side of the boat, abandoning one of my hands to the refreshing wave, and watching the little stream which ran by without a ripple, yet murmured as it flowed with strange mysteries.

A beautiful water-lily floated by. I made an abrupt movement to seize it, and M. Lafarge cried out in affright.

"Ah," said I to him laughing, "you are still pursued by imaginings of suicide; calm yourself; reason has returned, and my imagination, at times somewhat erratic, is never sovereign—*woman and despot* but for a few minutes."

"You will not leave us, then?"

"That depends upon yourself alone."

"You know, Marie, that my only wish is to obey and please you."

"Well, promise then to let me continue *very much* your sister and very little your wife. You are silent!

Come, accept my proposal, and you shall see how amiable a sister I can make."

"But sometimes may I not love you a little also as my wife?"

"We shall see—on great days, when you have been very amiable, and when you shall have given me a great courage; for I avow I have still fear—yes, a frightful fear."

"I accept what you will, little original; I love you to madness: do you not love me a little?"

"Not yet, but I feel that that will come, with the aid of God's grace, and, above all, *of your own*. To begin now, I allow you to kiss me three times; they shall be three binding signatures, to make the contract obligatory."

The three kisses would probably have been infinitely multiplied, but happily my beautiful water-lily enabled me to discharge a whole artillery of drops of water against him; and then we were at the landing-place, and were, of course, obliged to disembark.

The morrow of the day in which I had accepted my new duties, I ran over my ruinous château with a more indulgent eye. I made plans and projects for its embellishment. Then I wrote to those whom I loved, particularly to my aunt Garat, from whom I begged some articles of absolute necessity. A man-servant, wax candles, and other little means for naturalizing propriety in my little kingdom. I had not the least explanation with those that surrounded me; but I understood that my mother-in-law had learnt our conversation from her son, when she brought me, with a dignified and sad air, the keys belonging to the ministry of the interior, which she had, she told me, governed for forty years, with order, economy, and prudence. I would not receive the reins of government from hands that were more skilful than mine; but M. Lafarge required it, and all I could persuade him to accede to was, that a second bunch of keys should be made, that my mother-in-law might have access to all that was useful or agreeable, without recourse to me or my servants. From that moment I resolved that my thoughts should not rest upon the past, but be exclusively occupied on amelioration of the future. I therefore

determined to banish weakness and *ennui* at once. Yet at times my heart would suffer from vague sorrows—at times I wept, without reason for the tears whose bitterness corroded my cheeks; but I was ashamed both of my grief and my tears, and I carefully concealed them, recalling to my mind that I *ought* and *would* be happy. During the day I was occupied, active, and frequently gay. I determined to be amiable, and to diffuse happiness around me; but when night came, my fears and my sadness involuntary returned. I became something more than ill-humoured; and I would play the piano until three or four in the morning.

Truly I am tempted to call the bravery of despair what the world stigmatizes as weakness; and I experience as much astonishment as shame, in thinking of the audacious courage required to make a Marion Delorme, or a Manon Lescaut.

We had now wedding-visits to return, and were invited to a little ball. It was decided that we should pass a week at Uzerche.

During the few hours of repose that I took in my passage to Vigeois, they presented to me one of our neighbours, the Count de Tourdonnet. He was an amiable man, of chivalrous mind and character, an ancient officer of the navy, become, in consequence of his legitimist opinions, a very peaceable castellian. His conversation pleased me; and I was happy to learn that he was married to a young and pretty woman, who might become a pleasing distraction for my solitude, and a friend for my thoughts.

I was received at Uzerche by an uncle of M. Lafarge, Captain Matere, an old soldier, kind and loyal, who received me with affectionate kindness. I found only two faults in his family: a wife cold, passée, and withered as one of those old pictures of our grandmothers, which wear an eternal smile for the benefit of their descendants; and a daughter always laboriously employed in adorning a very indifferent person—who was sufficiently ugly to be good, but unhappily not sufficiently good to be ugly.

Among the other members of his family with whom I made acquaintance, I remarked M. Brugère, whom I was instructed to fear and detest, but whose sarcastic spirit

amused without terrifying me; and Mademoiselle Emma Pontier, a young girl with a noble heart—a loving and sweet creature, isolated by her taste and intelligence in the midst of her family—who wanted a friend, and unhappily had the misfortune to love me, on comprehending all the sympathy which drew me towards her.

The morrow of my arrival, I made thirty visits in the course of a day; that is to say, I walked from door to door to gratify a greedy curiosity, and supply new food for the malicious and calumniating jesters of the city of Uzerche.

I was stupified with all I was obliged to see or hear. The mistresses of the houses received us in their kitchens, with their hair in disorder, their caps covered with ribands and flowers, patched dresses, rumpled collerettes, blue stockings, old shoes, and an incredible amount of luxury in the article of dirty hands.

In these visits, one entered, saluted, sat down, and began to converse. The first theme was regularly, the regret I must experience at leaving Paris; *the ugliness of the country; the ennui which awaited me in a place so isolated as Glandier.* They would then congratulate M. Lafarge on the possession of my fortune, and interrogate me respecting my superb dresses, my *forte-piano*, and my *servante*, who appeared to them extremely elegant, and to whom I must pay at least *ninety francs* a year; then followed all the slanders and malicious topics of a scandalous conversation.

Astonishment stupified me during the first five visits, —*ennui* made me still more stupid during the remainder. I at first involuntarily occupied myself by endeavouring to find some clean place on which I could rest my eyes; and after a search, always in vain, I returned to the curl-papers of my hostess, which I began to read, and found them more or less amusing, according to the age of the brats she sent to school. To relieve me from these dull *corvées*, M. Pontier proposed a short excursion to La Grenerie, an estate belonging to M. Deplaces, a rich iron-master.

I found a beautiful château in the midst of magnificent forests. I was received with kindness by Madame De-

places, an old lady, who joined to the dignity of her age indulgent and cordial feelings; and by her daughter-in-law, a talented and elegant person, who was blessed with two charming children.

This return into the civilized world did me great good; but in returning, the weather was frightful,—the rain, driven by the tempest into the head of the britschka, streamed on our faces and our clothes. On arriving at Uzerche we were fearfully wet. As there was a family dinner, it was necessary I should put on my best looks; however, about ten o'clock, I suffered so much that I was obliged to beg permission to retire. Madame Pontier followed me to my room, and found me in a fever; she made me swallow large quantities of tisane, prescribed for me profound repose, and to render that more complete, installed Clementine as sick-nurse, and interdicted her nephew's entering my chamber.

I had slept more than an hour, oppressed by fever and fatigue, when I heard some one knocking violently at the door. I asked, with the impatience of a poor sick person suddenly woke from sleep, what was wanted?

"Open!" cried M. Lafarge.

"Has not Madame Pontier told you that, in consequence of my illness, she had directed Clementine to sleep in my chamber?"

"Send her away; I wish to enter."

"My friend, you must not. I beg you to let me sleep. Let us leave a lengthened explanation until to-morrow."

An oath of the most genteel description answered me; and thinking to be quit of him for this emphatic termination, I buried myself in the depths of my pillow.

"Madame," said my lady's-maid, after a short time, "I hear a singular noise in the lock—if there should be robbers?"

"It is nothing. How timid you are!"

The noise still continued; but recognising it as an amiable pleasantry on the part of my husband, I did not move. The bolt was solid; and I hoped after a few minutes he would get tired of his part of locksmith.

"Open," he shortly cried, however, with redoubled anger, "or I will break in the door!"

"It is impossible; I entreat you to leave me to repose."

"Open, I say, or I break in!"

"Break in, if you choose; but you know well that force will not avail with me."

"I am master here, and I will enter. It is not you I want, but my chamber; give it up to me, and go to the devil, if that suits you."

A furious kick, followed by the coarsest invectives, made me tremble. Then, strong from my indignation, I leapt out of bed, opened the door, and, crossing my arms on my bosom, stood before him in mute anger. M. Lafarge, his eyes haggard, his face distorted with passion, wished to drag me violently towards him, addressing me the while with odious epithets; but, exhausted by his rage, he was obliged to throw himself upon a bed, and I was able to retire into the antechamber, overwhelmed with shame and despair, concealing my head in my hands, to stifle my sobs; while my kind Clementine covered with tears and kisses my frozen feet, which she in vain sought to warm.

We were in the cabinet for a few minutes, when, on a sudden, groans, complaints, and cries of agony, were heard in the neighbouring chamber. Alarmed, we would have opened the door of the antechamber, in which we had taken refuge, to seek for help, but it was locked; and when I sent Clementine to M. Lafarge, who continued to groan, she found him in a frightful state, incapable of speaking, and writhing on his bed.

"Call for help, Madame," she immediately cried; "but for heaven's sake do not come in; he will make you die with fear."

I shook the door with all the force in my arms; but I hurt them, without being able to burst it open; and, half mad, I opened the window in despair, tied a sheet to it, and was preparing to let myself down into the court. At that moment Madame Matere, hearing the noise, came to the window to ask what was the matter. I cried to her that her nephew was horribly ill; that the door was locked; and that they must come and open it without delay.

In less than an instant the whole house was afoot; a

locksmith was sent for. At last M. Pontier and the family rushed into the chamber. My aunts, frightened by my bewildered air, took me to their room with them, to try and calm my despair; and soon after M. Pontier came to reassure me, and to tell me that his nephew had only suffered from a violent nervous attack, which he attributed to the coldness of the morning, and an excitement caused by the champagne. My uncle then made me lie down, gave me a calming potion, and surrounded me with delicate cares and consolation.

I sent, every quarter of an hour, to gain information respecting M. Lafarge. He asked to see me immediately; but M. Pontier refused to allow me to enter his chamber until the crisis was over: and when I understood what this crisis referred to, it was I who refused to enter; and I explained to my uncle that I should not have the power to endure a repetition of such a scene. I determined to prevent its recurrence by appearing profoundly hurt, and by showing to M. Lafarge that a few words of repentance and regret could not obtain pardon for an anger as unjust as brutal.

Overpowered by emotion, I slept towards morning; and at my waking, they brought me a tender letter from my aunt Garat, which appeared to arrive providentially, to drive away the memory of my terrors and anguish, and to make me forget my intended severity. I was consequently disposed to indulgence when M. Pontier came to ask my permission to conduct to me his *faulty nephew*, whom he had already subjected to three hours of lecture and repentance.

M. Lafarge cast himself weeping at my knees. I extended him my hand, which he embraced with transport. Forbidding him the least word of explanation, I promised never to make an allusion to that sad night, whose remembrance seemed so justly to humiliate and distress him.

M. Lafarge was as well as possible—I was ill; yet as he feared scandalous and annoying suppositions, if I did not attend a ball which took place that evening, I promised to vanquish my uneasiness. But at the same time I told him that, instead of making any secret of his violence, I

should simply state that his poor head, heated by champagne, had undergone a terrible nervous attack, which terrified my inexperience; and that, seeing him so ill, I had believed him quite dead.

"Go," I added, *smiling seriously;* "you have your pardon—I remember it no more; but take care not to reawaken this grief, for I could not survive it."

I was still sad and fatigued when it became necessary to prepare for the ball, and attend to my toilette. Seven was the hour fixed for the fête; but Mademoiselle Matere, raised by her elegance to the position of *lionne*, would not appear until an hour later than all the other ladies; and, thanks to this submission to her *lofty position*, I was able to enjoy, on my entrance, a complete *coup d'œil* of a Limousin rout.

CHAPTER XLII.

How singular a thing is a ball in a little provincial town, which has not the honour of being a prefecture, and which does not even possess the sweet consolation of possessing a sub-prefect! The ball to which I had been invited was one given to the beauties of Uzerche by the young collegians, who, having received their crowns in the morning, wished to dance with all their glory in the evening, and, chivalrous vanquishers of participles or translations, to make the sovereigns of their thoughts dance in honour of their triumphs.

The little hundred-sous piece, extracted from a grandmother's tenderness, or that which leapt, in a moment of pride, from a father's purse, are sacrificed in the preparations for the fête. These gallant boys have perhaps collected sixty francs—that is a great deal; and they can join two branch lustres to six beautiful candles, and the sharp melody of a flute to the shrieking notes of a violin.

An estaminet had lent its large saloon for the ball.

Around, on narrow benches, the lady dancers were sitting in the shadow of their mothers' turbans. In the middle, a compact mass of black-vested men, in white pantaloons, left but a difficult passage for the young stewards, as they performed their duty of receiving the new-comers, smiling at the women, and snuffing the candles. All the young girls, dressed in white and spotless muslin, cut in a virtuous fashion, like the tunics of the Holy Virgin, had very red arms under their Scotch thread gloves, and cheeks fresher than the knots of satin riband that glowed in their hair. They occupied themselves very attentively in keeping a double register of their engagements. The young unmarried girls, distinguished by a formidable streamer at the bottom of their skirt, and a rose over the ear, were excessively confidential to each other, and divided modest glances coquettishly between the partners past and partners to come with commendable impartiality.

The young wives, lost amidst the tulle, the satin ribands, flowers, and jewels of the marriage *trousseau*, talked loud, and laughed more loudly, as they disputed the qualities of their admirers. While this went on, the respectable mothers were estimating dresses and virtues; reckoning the dowers of the dancers; detailing the result of their arithmetical studies to their neighbours; and speculating on the hopes of catching the marriageable partners who seemed smitten by their daughters' charms. Thanks to the merits of novelty, I was honoured with the jealousy of all the women, on account of the admiration of all the men; and I was an absolute torture to the imagination of the elaborate calculators near. They were unable to value or comprehend my simple India muslin trimmed with hops, and found an improper and blamable levity in my head-dress, adorned with the blossoms of these same hops, from which I had borrowed all the simple elegance of my toilette. M. Lafarge presented some of his friends to me; and among others, M. de Meynard, whose lively and caustic spirit, with its Parisian memories and regrets, almost made me look on him as a countryman, and willingly accept him as my chevalier for the rest of the evening. The *bonhomie* of our young heroes, so happy in their ball, and so proud to show themselves gallant to the

ladies, caused me for a while to forget the scene of the previous evening; while the inconceivable novelties that surrounded me even gave me a few moments of joy, which were matters of astonishment to the rest of the assembly, who could not conceive of dancing in a provincial ball-room with pleasure in the eyes, and a smile on the lips.

In preparing for this ball, Mademoiselle Matere, with the double intention of *looking beautiful*, and vexing me by depriving me of the distinction of being the only female dressed in the *newest fashion*, had copied the shape of one of my marriage-dresses. It was only at the ball I recognised the brother she had improvised to my *corsage*.

Unhappily, I perceived at the same time that a second little *corsage*, quite indispensable to the modesty of this description of dress, had been forgotten; and that the any thing but ivory shoulders of my cousin were too freely shown above their silken prison. Thinking this rather more than ridiculous, I warned her with very periphrastic delicacy of her mistake; but my observations were very drily received, and I saw that she thought me jealous of the indiscretion of her criticised *corsage*.

The scandalized and sneering looks of the other girls, and the stifled laughter of the young men, had no more success than my warning. It was in the fashion, and there was no reply to this for a provincial lioness. All did not end with these ball-room criticisms; and the *marguillier*, charged with the task of observation by the curate of Uzerche, for the purpose of reporting to him the doings and looks of his sweet flock, did not forget, in his report, the *corsage* and shoulders of my cousin.

The next day at mass the text was accordingly the dangers of a ball and of worldly pleasures. After a fearful picture of the horrible sufferings destined to balance the joys of this life in everlasting hell, M. le curé turned to Mademoiselle Matere, who was not two steps from his pulpit, and uttered the following peroration, in the thundering voice of a prophet:—

"Wo, three times wo, to this age of iniquity, in which one beholds a mother herself lead her daughter to the schools of Satan; in which one sees a young Christian, desperate at counting three-and-twenty virgin years, trust

not to the grace of God, but to the grace of her shoulders, for catching a husband. Believe me, brethren, that the wrath of God shall fall on charms conjured up by the sorcery of fashion; and the honest man will not choose a wife by such marks of distinction."

I know not how the poor girl, thus admonished, could support this public humiliation; nor can I conceive how her father and brother could restrain their wrath. Every mouth repeated the words of this charitable address—every charitable feminine in the parish commented on them.

The Matere family for some time remained embroiled with their spiritual guide; but as in the provinces the dignity of certain positions does not permit their holders to be contented with a vicar as confessor, Easter brought peace and forgetfulness.

Religion in Limousin is but a compound of fanaticism and superstition. The clergy of the country parts appeared to me generally very ignorant and intolerant; the pulpit often becoming the echo of scandal, and the first stone being too often thrown by the shepherd of the flock himself. In the devotion of the women there is a total absence of *juste milieu*. Some sacrificing to the "what will people say," fulfil with as much negligence as coldness the *form* of their religious duties; while others, whom they call *menettes*, forget their household for the church, their husbands for their confessor, utter as many prayers as scandals, and if they give no alms to their *suffering* brethren, load with sweet confections their curé who suffers not. The churches are dirty and dilapidated; divine service is celebrated without calm or gravity; fasting and abstinence are preached to poor people who live on herbs and black bread; the vanity and dangers of the things of this world are denounced to poor wretches who possess not even the vanity of cleanliness, and who know nothing beyond their pigs, their fowls, and their privations. What a difference between such sermons and those of the simple-hearted curé of Villers-Hellon, who taught our peasants to assist and mutually love each other; to offer prayers amid their labours; and who said to the old men, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" to the chil-

dren, "tell the truth, and honour your parents;" who taught families honesty, and young girls virtue. Superstition, all mighty amongst the Limousins, still exists in the middle ranks.

On arriving at Glandier, I was told that the spirits of the old monks revisited the earth, and that Madame Buffière had seen several of these ghostly confessors in the cloisters. Madame Lafarge, who had no religious principles, and perhaps did not even believe in the Gospel, most firmly believed in the devil. She told me, that having forgotten one day to make the sign of the cross on her daughter's cradle, to conjure the demon, the malicious spirit had overturned the barcelonnette, and left the blue traces of his black nails on the neck of the unhappy child.

Before returning to Glandier, it was agreed that I should have an opportunity of admiring the little capital of La Corrèze; and as M. Lafarge had some business to transact there, M. Pontier accompanied us to act as my chaperon during his absence.

Tulle is deliciously situated for the lovers of the picturesque. The houses, ranged upon the slopes of two little hills, seem to have there placed themselves as if in curiosity, to look upon their own Corrèze, and overlook the diligences as they roll under the avenues of the promenade;—the dwellings of the lower classes, dirty, frail, and without order, are grouped at the top of the amphitheatre—those of the wealthy burgesses form a cincture to the river of regular and civilized-looking houses.

The interior of the town is frightful; the streets are staircases, filthy, narrow, and difficult as the paths to Paradise; the houses disclose to the spectator a profound misery. Dark-looking men, sooty and unshaven, make the anvil ring under their blows; while women, sitting at the threshold of their doors, exchange volleys of slander, from one end of the street to the other, administering at intervals innumerable boxes on the ear to the numberless children who are wrangling for chestnuts at their feet. Carriages are prohibited in Tulle—they would indeed be useless in these scarped streets; accordingly there is no society, every one living for himself and by himself. The

belles Tulloises, who are sufficiently plain, employ themselves in their households, but still more in those of their neighbours; they go to three balls in the winter for the sake of finding subjects for scandal; and when the balls fail to afford them, call to their assistance the ever-new and potent arms of calumny. As for the men, they pass their lives in the cafés, or at the halls. They are almost wholly advocates, attorneys, physicians, and republicans. Some few possess both talent and rascality, but most of them the rascality without the talent.

After having made a visit to the prefect, and some friends of M. Lafarge, M. Pontier made me admire the manufactory of arms at Souliac; then, in spite of him, impelled by an irresistible impulse, I insisted on seeing the prison, the burial-ground, and also the hall of justice.

It was assize-time. A poor girl, accused of infanticide, stood at the bar; and I was struck with astonishment as I, for the first time, beheld the array of human justice, so lacking majesty, and so sadly sinister. Neither thought nor understanding was visible on the brows of the jurymen, and the foreheads of the bench were as destitute of dignity. I was very soon about to quit that terrible hall, when I was detained by the eloquent and impressive speech of the young advocate who defended the accused. The poor girl was acquitted; and the same evening, when M. Pontier persuaded me to scale the rocks that overlooked Tulle, I was pleased to meet the young defender who in the morning had made me feel so deeply. I was pleased that my uncle introduced him to me; pleased that he joined our party, and that the very sincere compliments I paid him appeared to be received by his heart more than his vanity.

Night, enveloped in her light veils of mist, had not yet donned her coronet of stars; work had ceased; the *Angelus* echoed in the distance; some birds were already sleeping, while others, perched above their nests, warbled with a sweet monotony to their companions. We followed a narrow path, which neither allowed the support of an arm, nor permitted conversation. Only when the vast panorama stretched at our feet gave me a new impression, I turned to my two guides to make them share it; and

several times surprised the eye of M. Lachaud, which, fixed upon me, appeared to interrogate, to study, and to divine my thoughts. That look, severe and suspicious during our walk, expressed at our return a sympathetic sadness: it appeared to protect me, to defend me, and to promise me a friend for the future.

I saw M. Lachaud no more until the days of my sorrow; then he was the first at my side—and I expected him.

CHAPTER XLIII.

After these three weeks of visiting, which were for the most part tedious enough, I was glad to find myself *at home*, and commenced with courage my part of Robinson Crusoe. Having six bricklayers at my disposal, I at once forgot the agreeable in the useful. I had part of the mansion, which was in a state of ruin, shut up. I had workmen to repair the roof—locksmiths for the doors and to the windows; but all this went on so slowly and so ill, and the work of the evening had so often to be undone in the morning, that winter advanced quicker than our labours, and I despaired for this year to shelter myself from the rain and frost. In the interior of the mansion I obtained more satisfactory results. Seconded by a good domestic, whom M. Lafarge had obtained for me from Paris, I had established the despotic reign of cleanliness. The carpets descended from the top of the commodes to the humility of warming our feet; the old walls were stripped of their spiders' drapery; and the dust was exiled to the garret, along with the luxurious red hangings, which were replaced by modest calico curtains of a dazzling whiteness.

In my own chamber I united all which could minister to the comfort of my life—my favourite books, my work, and my piano. A large table placed in the middle was covered with all that was necessary for writing; the chimney-piece and the commode were strewn with the souvenirs of

my infancy and my girlhood; and around me were the portraits of those I had loved, encouraging me with their looks, smiling on my efforts and at my anxiety to be happy.

I could never believe that the souls of those absent friends who have preceded us into eternity content themselves with a few tears and prayers. No! according to my ideas, they wish that their memories should preserve us from evil, and that our life should be sufficiently pure to honour their memory and deserve their blessing.

The most difficult part of my reform was that which attacked the numberless abuses and intolerable dirtinesses of the kitchen and the service of the table. In that country, where all business is transacted and all pleasures commence or terminate at table—where friendship consists much more in a tender interchange of dinner than of thoughts, the art of cooking is one of seduction, indispensable in young wives, who rarely trust to mercenary hands that great instrument of household pleasure and allurement.

There is no Limousin husband so ill-humoured who cannot be pacified by an excellent cup of coffee: a wife is all-powerful when she can cook a hare *à la royale.* A potato-salamander which has not been burnt is an infallible remedy for jealousy; and the mistress of a family who knows how to vanquish the difficulties of confectionary has almost acquired the right of deceiving *her spouse* with impunity. Grand dinners last four or five hours; and as the number of dishes is known and commented on by the whole neighbourhood, quality must necessarily be sacrificed to quantity. The company sits down, then, round a table covered with a countless throng of large and small dishes, combined in a manner that enable them to arrange the largest number possible. Every joint of veal or mutton has a rendezvous there under different shapes; roast pullets contemplate boiled ones with an air of contempt; ducks served with olives make the modest ducks with turnips grow pale with anger. The dinner is, in fact, a gastronomic and ferocious parody of the massácre of the innocents.

The interval between the first and second course is a critical moment for the mistress of the house. Her un-

quiet eye follows the dishes which they bring in, and observes the manner in which they place them. A servant forgets the symmetry of the table—the lady blushes and makes uncomprehended signs—rises with vexation to re-establish the order of battle, while she scolds the rude peasant who has played so ill his part of maitre d'hôtel.

This second part of the dinner, which has only caused the death of five rôtis, is in revenge composed of every known vegetable, of creams of all colours, and cakes of all kinds. At last, when the dessert is placed on the table, after a crisis more violent still than the first for the amiable hostess, the gaiety becomes more noisy. The butterflies which perch on the cakes; the doves that repose on the top of the biscuits of Savoy; the burning hearts which are pierced with arrows on the top of the macaroons,—become the texts of the most gallant wit and the most piquant pleasantries. Then the young persons blushingly discuss the sentimental romances of Mademoiselle Puget. The mothers sing songs of the Directory; and the merry songs of the fathers and the husbands terminate joyously the charming reunion. Besides the dinners, there are déjeûners-dînatoires, almost as long and as sumptuous; lunches, indispensable in country visits; and lastly, pancakes, which agreeably replace the lectures and morning concerts of other parts of France. Some time after my arrival, having visited a physician who was one of M. Lafarge's friends, I accepted the offer of *refreshment;* and after waiting two hours, they brought me red wine, white wine, liqueurs, and a large calf's head dressed *au naturel.*

The kitchen, that sanctuary of the Limousin wife, where she passes the greater part of her household life, should be a clean and elegant laboratory, worthy those great artistes—it is nothing of the kind. It is always dirty, damp, and disorderly. The fowls walk over the tables, the children cry there, dogs and cats abound there, and make it their residence. When I required that the kitchen at Glandier should be clean every day at every hour, promises, threats, and recompenses were necessary to obtain it from the domestics of the country; but I could never altogether banish the villanous fowls and pigs, which in this province replace the beautiful sheep of Picardy.

I had great trouble to obtain a few alterations in the arrangements of the table. There were several half rebellions when I substituted two for the four habitual meals, when I required that the linen should be scrupulously clean, and the plate cleaned every day. The first time I had company to dinner, having had the forty dishes of etiquette replaced by four modest entrées, and having large vases of flowers and fruit placed on the table, my mother-in-law was in despair; and having vainly supplicated me, in the name of the honour of the house, not to retrench the proper number of dishes, ran in tears to reclaim the *rights* of her son in order to compel me to yield.

Those rights were scarcely expressed; I made M. Lafarge understand by a kiss that *I* was in the right; and at the hour of dinner, perceiving that, in spite of my order, they had considerably exceeded my bill of fare, I boldly had the surplus carried back to the kitchen.

This act of authority put an end to all discussion; and it is but proper to state, that the discontent of Madame Lafarge did not endure above a week. I had begged my mother-in-law to remain at the head of the house; this she had refused; and, in my turn, I would not accept a government controlled in the eyes of my servants, nor, while I willingly received suggestions, permit perfidious critiques to be made to my husband.

My mother-in-law loaded me with caresses, flatteries, and attention; yet I perceived that she was very jealous of my empire over her son, and that she tried to destroy it. I pardoned her: the heart of a mother should scarcely bear to share the tender affection of a child, and I was fully aware of all the *essential qualities* which I wanted to gain the entire sympathy of Madame Lafarge. Our habits separated us even more than our ages. Having always been very plain, with a husband who was very faithless, she had been compelled to seek in the bustle of her household for all her enjoyments, and her ideas were consequently singularly contracted to that object. My mother-in-law suspected every thing and every body; was mysterious in her words, still more so in her actions; and passed her days locked up in her chamber, the door of which, double-bolted, was not opened without infinite

precautions. That chamber was the most curious of any in the house. Madame Lafarge kept her provisions and her small culinary apparatus there: turkeys fed in one corner, cheeses grew mouldy in another. The fire-place was unceasingly encumbered with saucepans and coffee-pots. She would not permit my domestics to touch it with a broom, and the maids did not even dare to enter the room for the purpose of making her bed. Madame Lafarge still preserved the custom of going to bed without undressing; only at night she turned her shawl inside out, to reverse it again with the first blush of Aurora.

As for Madame Buffière, my sister-in-law, she was a little termagant, who led her husband and her mother, who feared her, by the nose; and was herself similarly led by a clerk, who had become a partner in their concern. This M. Magnaud, who had but one eye, from his vulgar and gross manners, as well as his trifling conversation and impertinent familiarity, became insupportable to me. Knowing, however, that my sister-in-law *loved him like a brother*, I endeavoured not to be rude to him, although I kept him at a respectful distance, whose bounds I never suffered him to pass.

This little colony, of my sister-in-law and my *two brothers-in-law*, which daily joined our own, left shortly after my arrival for a forge they had rented at Fayes. I was not much grieved by this *crescendo* of solitude. Madame Buffière loved me with too great an excess of words and kisses for me to think her very sincere. She was not without wit; but she was one of those subtle and shrewd spirits, who call a smile to the lip, but produce no echo in the heart. In short, M. Lafarge having recommended me to be very reserved and cautious in my conversations with her, I saw her depart with more joy than sadness.

At the moment of her departure, little Adelaide Buffière clung to my neck with such despair, that I entreated her mother to trust me with her for the winter. She consented; and that good little creature, who loved me, became my daily companion. When I played the piano, she would dance; if I sang, she would listen and weep; and when I was occupied in embroidering, she sat at my feet and learnt her alphabet.

M. Lafarge, occupied in his business, passed his mornings in making out accounts, and receiving the dealers who came to him to sell wood or purchase iron. I rarely saw him before mid-day. Having sometimes sought him in his bureau, I remarked that my presence always seemed to annoy and constrain him; so I resolved never again to set my foot in that sanctuary of business.

After breakfast, we went to superintend the labours of some masons, as also those of eight pioneers, who had been placed entirely under my orders, to level the environs of the ruin, which I wished to surround with sweet shrubs and evergreens. I had formed an immense plan, which was to be realized bit by bit, and which I hoped to accomplish in six years. Absolute mistress of all the details of improvement, every thing I decided upon was sure to be agreed to without discussion; and M. Lafarge appeared enchanted, when, with a level in one hand, or a square in the other, I surveyed the proportions of the gothic windows in my little gallery, or traced out the curves of a path. Thence we would go to the forge; and it became my turn to share in his ideas of improvement; to listen and to be instructed. Sometimes we rode out together to make acquaintance with some lovely view; at other times we went on foot through forests in search of some beautiful mountain flowers, and I would return with bunches of heath and purple foxglove, garlands of honeysuckle, and hops, which M. Lafarge had sought among the thorns, for the purpose of making me a festive crown. In the evening, I read my favourite books aloud, or played the airs which had soothed my childhood, or the ballads of his province. Sometimes I would sing some sad romance; but then he slept, and my dark thoughts would return upon me, and I was miserable, alarmed, and not very amiable until the morning.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A MONTH after my arrival at Glandier, I was invited to the baptism of one of M. Tourdonnet's daughters. My first visit to St. Martin took place consequently in the midst of a *fête*, which had assembled his numerous family. They were cheerful, and I found among them the amiable and polished usages of Parisian life. Madame de Tourdonnet was a charming little woman, all red and white, with a pretty little hand and foot, with the rare virtue there of neglecting culinary perfection to play the part of a ladylike hostess. M. Tourdonnet revived in his little circle the noble and cordial hospitality of our ancient chevaliers. His words and looks gave you the most sincere welcome. He received you with heart and soul. In talking with M. Tourdonnet, we were always removed from those commonplaces which belong to the dominion of positive and ordinary life. He was satirical on opinions, without being so on persons; and in his firm determination never to agree with others, propounded the most original ideas, and gave rise to the most amusing and animated discussions.

There was no female to whom I was a stranger in this little *fête*, which brought together all the old friends of the family, and some young men intimately connected with M. de Tourdonnet. Amongst these, I remarked M. le Marquis de Corhn, who, by his distinguished manners, free from the slightest pretension, his noble mien and handsome face, made me dream upon the means of metamorphosing him into a cousin, and of transplanting into our solitude, with his assistance, an elegant relative whom I dearly loved.

Having passed the night at St. Martin, the next day was devoted to visiting the beautiful château in detail. Its gardens are elegantly laid out, and its beautiful meadows and woods, which stretch to a considerable distance round it, make it a superb agricultural property. I left this place

with the desire to return often, and become the friend of its kind inhabitants. Rough roads doubled the distance between us, but that was a difficulty which a horse easily overcame; and I already knew the thickets, rocks, and ravines of the Limousin roads so well, that, far from dreading, I felt a certain pleasure in braving them, and in not suffering my speed to be slackened by such trifling obstacles.

A short time after this period, I was unwell, and obliged to keep my bed with a burning fever, and horrible pains in the head. During this short illness, M. Lafarge passed all the days by my side. He did not even trust me by night entirely to Clementine's care, and rose many times to visit me with the most restless anxiety. One evening, when I had been sadly stricken by intelligence from my friends in Alsace, I felt myself much worse; and M. Lafarge watched by me the whole night. Towards midnight the blood rushed to my head, the extremities of my limbs contracted—became cold; I had scarcely power to speak, and soon after lost my consciousness.

When I recovered from this state, I saw every one in the house around me. M. Lafarge, sobbing on his knees near my bed, warmed my hands with his breath, crying out that he would not survive me, but would die if I should die. Clementine wept, and sprinkled cold water over my head. Madame Lafarge looked on with a frightened air; while some women and some of our workmen were praying on their knees at a distance in the alcove. I could not yet speak; but moved by all this grief, I tried to press the hand of M. Lafarge, who, perceiving me revive, embraced me with transports of joy.

This despair, these testimonies of love and of gladness, which saluted my return to life, touched me deeply,—my eyes, my words, expressed it; and I was happy to revive, and feel myself so well beloved. I was therefore, when the physician arrived, almost calm. M. Lafarge told him that I had suffered from congestion of the brain, and that he had saved me by applying blisters to my feet, cold water to my head, and bathing my hands in hot water. Dr. Bardon did not agree with him, but attributed my alarming state to a nervous attack. I had suffered so

much, and M. Lafarge was so pleased to have saved my life, that the decision, not very delicately expressed, of his Esculapian friend did not lessen my gratitude, and I did not doubt of the danger from which he had preserved me.

I had never feared death; but the thought of dying separated from my sister, and far from those I loved, without any time to leave them all that love and my latest thoughts, appalled me. Above all, I felt that the earth would lie heavy on me in a strange country, amid unknown dead. I made M. Lafarge swear that he would send me to sleep my eternal slumber near my dear grandfather, in the shelter of the prayers, the thoughts, and the flowers, which would be lavished on me in the cemetery of Villers-Hellon.

On the following day, Clementine came to me when I was awake with a mysterious air, and gave me a large letter from M. Lafarge.

"Why this letter? what has happened?" I asked.

"Nothing, Madame; but Monsieur, who loves you so much, has made his will. He has read it to me, and I heard it with tears. He desired me to give it you secretly, and to tell you to conceal it among your papers."

I did not immediately comprehend this resolution of M. Lafarge; but after reading the wish he expressed to be interred near me at Villers-Hellon, I recalled to mind the prayer I had made on the previous evening, and was touched to the bottom of my soul by the delicacy and love which there was in this proceeding. I even wept a few sweet tears when my husband entered the chamber. I expressed tenderly to him the emotion his conduct had caused me, and then chid him for preserving these sad thoughts of death.

"Yesterday you have learnt," he said to me, "on how slight a thread hangs life; it caused me, alas! to reflect, that if I died suddenly, my fortune would not come to you; even your own would perhaps be compromised by a ruinous participation in commerce. What I have during my life is yours, and shall be yours after my death. Now I am tranquil; but to avoid discussion, or complete quarrel with my mother and sister, I ask you to preserve the greatest secrecy touching this proof of my affection for you."

I promised this to him, and determined also to make a will, but without mentioning it to him; for I feared I might wound him by appearing rather to follow his example than obey the dictates of my own heart. I had never executed a deed of this nature, and knew no more of law than that which suffices to marry us. I should consequently have been much embarrassed in making my will, had I not thought of copying the text of those parts in the will of M. Lafarge, which seemed to render our testaments valid in the eyes of the law. But I could not imitate his generous donation. My affection to my sister, and the aunt-like love I already felt for the little child she was about to present us both, rendered it impossible for me wholly to abandon all my fortune. I therefore left all that I possessed to M. Lafarge, with the liberty of employing it as he chose, without limit or restriction, during his life, but with an obligation that it should be restored after his death as a dowry for my sister's eldest daughter. I also disposed of all the little jewels which were dear to me in legacies to those who loved me; and not knowing whom I could charge with these last wishes, that they might not be annulled or frustrated, but be religiously observed, I entrusted with their execution Madame Lafarge, who swore not to mention the subject to her son, but to preserve it secret and sealed until her death or mine. My mother-in-law appeared pleased and touched with what I had done, and thanked me a thousand times for the provident affection I displayed for her son.

I was not quite convalescent, when one of my labourers came to make me a present of a basket of apples, beautiful enough to have lineally descended from the first apple of creation. M. Lafarge was desirous of using this beautiful fruit for an exhibition of his dexterity; and after a few pretty passes with them, managed to throw the largest apple through a window, which he broke in shivers. I should easily have consoled myself for this destruction by laughing at the appalled vanity of M. Lafarge; but the weather was cold and damp, and I found the contact of the air did my convalescent head very little good. I sent to Uzerche for a glazier—he was ill; another resided at

Lubersac—he was gathering his vintage: at last I was resigning myself with some ill-humour to the base necessity of submitting to a paper square, when it came into my head to employ one of Madame de Léautaud's diamonds for the purpose of cutting a large sheet of glass which I had preserved in a cabinet, and which might thus replace the broken pane.

In an instant I went to seek the little reticule which contained them, and was drawing one of the little diamonds out, when M. Lafarge entered, and finding me thus occupied, began to interrogate me as to the when, the why, and the how, after the usual fashion of our lords and masters. To my great concern, instead of attending to my new trade, I was obliged to relate him a history, in which I had to conceal some things and explain many others—in short, to make a Limousin husband understand that there are delicacies which prohibit the betrayal, even to him, of the name of a compromised and trusting friend.

M. Lafarge would not only see the useful diamond, but also all the others which were in the reticule. He weighed them, estimated them, sought their value in his books on metallurgy. In short, I had exhausted all my patience, when, to increase my misfortune, in came Madame Lafarge, and he made her admire the lustre of all the little gems which lay glittering in the sun.

"Oh," cried she, "how beautiful! and how valuable they must be! Tell me, Marie, who gave them to you? Why do you not use them? Why have you said nothing about them to me? It is quite a treasure!" I answered rather harshly, that it was no treasure of mine. Then came a thousand other questions; and M. Lafarge seeing that I reddened with impatience, took away his mother, and made me a sign to be silent. I should have been miserable at my indiscretion and imprudence, had I not felt that sooner or later it would have been indispensable that I should confide the matter to my husband, that the diamonds might be returned to Madame de Léautaud, or sold, and the money sent to M. Clavé. The concurrence of M. Lafarge would have been to me both a moral and material necessity.

When M. Lafarge returned to me, he appeared delighted.

"Come!" said he, "be content; for I managed the matter delightfully. I have made my mother believe that the diamonds are yours; but that you did not wish them seen until you had sufficient to form a *parure*."

"Such a tale is beyond belief!"

"My mother believed it, however, very easily; but you know nothing of business. When one is engaged in commerce, we must throw dust in the eyes of the world; and the richer I make you out, the richer shall I become."

"I must confess to you, that I do not much desire a fortune gained by such means."

"I do not ask you to employ them; leave me to do so alone."

"At least let me entreat you to prevent Madame Lafarge from hawking *your* diamond-story."

"My mother will do what I wish her; she was thunderstruck when I told her they were worth 30,000 francs."

"I wonder at your exaggeration, when you know they are scarcely worth 6000."

After we had used the diamond to cut the glass with, I found it useless to replace it and the others in their reticule; and I enclosed them in a box, that M. Lafarge might deposit for security in his strong room. Not daring to put the name of Madame de Léautaud upon the box, I wrote thereon that of Lecointe, an honest man, Marie's jeweller, to whom we might have entrusted the secret, in case of absolute necessity.

CHAPTER XLV.

Since I had first learnt to ride, I had dreamt of and desired a gray mare, light and swift as the vapoury clouds which run over the heaven after the storm. What, then,

were my joy and my gratitude, when a delightful attention came one day to realize the fairy dream of ten years!

In accompanying M. Lafarge on a visit to some woods, in the neighbourhood of the Pompadour breeding-stables, we met a good priest, lamenting on the wayside the kicking ingratitude of his horse, whose saintly education had never been able to subdue its capricious humour—who found a malicious pleasure in trying the patience, of compromising the gravity as well as the skull, of its venerable master. The malignant little animal, freed from her rider and her saddle, neighed and leaped with joy, letting the wind play with her mane, or browsed disdainfully the flowers of some blooming hay; then approaching her poor victim with pretended modesty, she gave him hope of catching her bridle, and then escaped again, to indulge in her wild gallops, her kicks, and her boundings.

This scene amused me; I own, to my shame, I had more sympathy for the wild rebel than pity for her respectable owner. And I was still thinking of her, when, on the morrow, as I awoke, M. Lafarge announced to me that he had purchased the curé's pretty mare; and that it was mine, certainly mine, and mine alone.

I leapt out of bed to give a welcome and provender to my new companion; and as they told me she had Arab blood in her veins, I baptized her with the name of Arabska.

It was a charming animal, not four years old, of an elegant colour, with gazelle-like feet, and a character original, capricious, and very independent. I entered with pleasure on the task of breaking her in. At first she tried to throw me; but seeing I laughed at her vain endeavours, and preferring my caresses to my whip, she began to love and to obey me like a lamb. Our tastes were the same; not knowing how to go at a moderate or equal pace, sometimes she shot away like an arrow, sometimes crawled along with nonchalance, watching the butterflies as they flew, or listening to the voice of the breeze. Sometimes lively and bold, when she perceived an obstacle her eyes flashed, and she turned towards me to im-

plore from me the order to brave it; at other times timid and fearful, she trembled at a bird or her own shadow, and was only reassured on hearing my voice, or feeling my hand as it played with her mane; then would she neigh with a singular expression of pride and joy.

Arabska, in enabling me to go abroad at all times, also enabled me to go much further from home; and, thanks to her, I was enabled to admire the noble and proud stallions of the Pompadour stables. In that establishment, the racers, selected for their beauty, after having been slaves, become tyrants, and make tributary to their well-being the arms, the time, and the understanding of many men consecrated to these animals by the government.

They had told me I should find some gentlemanly officers at Pompadour: I confess that I took small pains to assure me of the fact, charmed and interested as I was by the truly chivalrous tenants of that sweet retreat.

Another of my excursions conducted me to an aunt of M. Lafarge, whose talents, understanding, and writings, they had often mentioned to me with pride. In person she was little, invariably shadowed by a huge green and yellow hat, as poetical as an *omelette aux fines herbes*. My aunt received me with two learned kisses, the most beautiful of all phrases, and said gravely to a sub-lieutenant of infantry of sixty, whom she held by the hand,—

"Dearest, bow to this amiable niece, who comes into our deserts like the dove of the ark, bearing a branch of myrtle instead of a branch of olive. Panzani, my love, embrace your niece—she allows it—and then go and gather her a rose. He does not understand a word of French—he is a Corsican," she said to me in a whisper; "but if he speaks ill, he knows well how to love. Our marriage was quite a romance. He was dying with love for me, and my bewildered heart sacrificed on the altar of Hymen a life that I had determined on consecrating to the chaste sisters of Apollo."

Madame Panzani was silent; I found time to breathe, take off my hat, and we seated ourselves at the table. Her *déjeûner* was most learned; all the dishes of which it consisted had been made after *historical* receipts. The Jews, Greeks, and Romans, had been consulted for our

first course; the *Cuisinier Impérial*, the *Cuisinier Royal*, the *Cuisiniere Bourgeoise*, the *Maison Rustique*, and the *Journal des Connaissances utiles*, had presided over her *entremets;* and lastly, the entire dessert had been composed after secrets borrowed from nuns of the middle ages, wives of directors of the *grand siècle*, and young unmarried ladies of the age we live in. M. Lafarge, who had business at Brives, proposed to me to remain a day at La Côte. I acceded with pleasure; and Madame Panzani was all kindness to me. She showed me her mulberry-trees, approved and applauded by an agricultural committee; her monstrous potatoes, which were to fatten the future ages of Limousin; her beet-roots, which were to sweeten them; and her gooseberry-wine, which was to intoxicate them. In addition, she told me that M. Gauthier d'Uzerche studied her *pruneaux composés*, with the intention of submitting them to the taste of the Chamber of Deputies, and that two academicians had congratulated her on the cultivation of her sorrel—*Panzani-multifolia*.

On returning from our promenade, my aunt talked exclusively of literature and history. Bewailing the indolence of our writers, she drew out of her cabinet a mountain of manuscripts, and said she wished to consult me on a history of France before the deluge, which she intended bestowing on her country. In effect, having put on her spectacles, hemmed, and cleared her throat modestly, she instructed me for four hours on the deeds and actions of our antediluvian kings.

What erudition!!! I was stupified, appalled at my ignorance, and I trembled for our grandchildren at this additional amount of history to learn.

Pharamond, how I execrated thee! After having given us so many silly descendants, have you actually the impudence to pretend to ancestors, and to make us sicken and yawn over the fathers of the fathers of your fathers?

Madame Panzani's castle was situated in a lovely position—the mountains of the Saillant—the meadows watered by the Vézère—the vineyards and rich cornfields stretched out beneath the little terrace. The interior of the house displays an artistical disorder and origi-

nality. Books encumbered the tables and chairs: some dried on their learned leaves simples, champignons, and pears; fruits of every kind were confectioning in glass bottles; and the inkstand also fulfilled the function of a salt-cellar. Under a portrait of Napoleon hung M. Panzani's martial shako, which, in its discreet lining concealed the false hair, curl-papers, and pearl powder of the female author. While the sabre, which was formerly used in combat with the Bedouin, served as a support for superb bunches of grapes and bunches of morilla cherries. During the evening I passed at La Côte we had a dreadful storm. Madame Panzani, in affright, assembled her labourers around her, set them all praying on their knees, and commanded her little servant to sing, with all the strength of his lungs, the psalms of *la pénitence;* while she busied herself in counting her rosary, sometimes stopping to conceal her fear in the bosom of her old and unconcerned beloved one. When the thunder raged most heavily, the châtelaine would call to her little saboted groom—

"Baptistou, my darling! sing thy *complainte d'Alger.*"

And then, turning towards her spouse, she murmured to him,

"Then you were in all your glory, my duck; you forgot love."

If a flash called her back to her terrors, she would cry—

"Quick, Baptistou; sing your psalm again."

And Baptistou shouted saintly with the tempest; the labourers prayed; and the rosary passed through her fingers rapidly.

On the next day, when I was dressing, I took a decanter of water from the chimney-piece, drank a glass of it, and was about to use the rest in my ablutions, when Madame Panzani entered my chamber, and recoiled in affright.

"Oh, good God!" she cried, "you have swallowed all my holy water. You have profaned it: perhaps you have even defiled it with your cheeks! Lord Jesus! if it be an involuntary sacrilege, have mercy on us!" And while lamenting thus, she poured back her holy water

piously into its saintly vessel; and I had great difficulty to make her understand that, instead of being damned, I ought to be purified and blessed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

My rides and my visiter did not cause me to forget the forge. I went there incessantly. The founders were proud to initiate me into the slightest details of their art; and when the fruit-sellers of the *bas* Limousin came there with their mules loaded with melons, peaches, and grapes, I used to buy all their charge for a few sous, and distribute it among these poor parched people, made thirsty by the furnace of their little hell.

Almost every evening, at ten, M. Lafarge unmoored the boat, and we went to assist at the casting of the font. It was poetically beautiful to see the flames light, with an infernal radiance, the rocks against which the lofty furnace was erected, and the meadows that stretched out at their feet. In that half light the willows were transformed into weeping nymphs, the poplars into giants; and the limes were changed into sylphs, who danced to the song of the crickets. In the hall, the master-founder gave his orders in a sonorous voice, whilst his panting and hurried assistants managed the fire, skimmed the dross from the surface of the melted mass, and then at a signal given by him, lifting the barrier, let the ocean of fire meander through the canals opened in the sand. Thousands of blue sparks rose from those burning streams, and leapt and died away in the darkness, then glittered again and vanished, leaving the forge in silence and in shadow.

We usually returned to the house conversing together. M. Lafarge, who kept me a stranger to the state of his affairs, imparted to me alone his ideas as to their improvement; and in particular spoke to me of an important discovery which he believed he had made, the results of which occupied him night and day. Having studied, to please him, and in order to understand him, the large

"Ironmaster's Manual," I was enabled to encourage and approve him, and to indulge reasonable pride in seeing him quit the dull path of routine, and take to the noble one of improvement and progress. His discovery was this :—

According to the common method, the metal fused by the action of fire is poured into sand-moulds, and forms on cooling thick bars of smelted ore, technically called "*gueuses*." These *gueuses*, in order to be reduced to a metallic state, are a second time fused by heat; by which means the metallic particles are freed from impure gases and dross, and then collected into a large ball (called technically a "*loupe*"), which the forging hammers, plied by machinery, shape into angles, rods, pigs, &c.

Abandoning this antiquated plan, M. Lafarge wished to cause the liquid ore to flow directly into the refining furnace, destined to reduce the pigs once smelted into a second state of fusion, and thus effect a saving of time, labour, and the charcoal employed in remelting the *gueuses;* reducing, in short, the expenses one-third by this new method. I thought the process so simple, so easily adopted, and so preferable to the old one, that I concluded it must be already practised in other mining districts, and was only unknown in remote Limousin. I might, however, have convinced myself of the contrary by perusing the latest treatises on the manufacture of iron. Then I feared it must be indispensable to smelt the ore twice in order to obtain iron of good quality; and M. Lafarge promised to make an experiment in hopes of destroying the only doubt I had left. I was not learned enough to comprehend the chemical explanations, which only bewildered without convincing me; and, in honour of my incredulity, I exacted the substitution of practice for theory.

The experiment was exceedingly difficult to make. It was necessary to bear a whole day's impatient alternations of hopes and fears; and when, towards evening, M. Lafarge brought me in triumph a superb sample of iron, I shared his emotion, and congratulated him with much joy and pride.

My husband communicated his important discovery, in

vague and general terms, to his brother-in-law; and as he did not speak of it to his clerks, I remained his only confidant. While all about us were asleep, I wrote, at his dictation, the results of his study and research. He imparted to me a perfect knowledge of the meaning of the technical terms, and then entrusted to me the final preparation of the essay he proposed to submit to the minister to obtain a patent of invention.

Although this new method was very simple, its execution demanded great care, an extensive knowledge of metallurgy, familiarity with the process of iron-smelting, and a considerable advance of capital. M. Lafarge, a lover of his trade from his childhood, united to fifteen years of constant practice and hard study an unconquerable perseverance, proof against all obstacles. The first difficulties could be easily conquered by time and labour; the last was not, however, so easy to overcome. I was told that a loan in that poor country, destitute of immediate connexion with the Paris bankers, was impossible. I knew that in order to sell my estates in Villers-Hellon, as I proposed to my husband, there must be first made a partition amongst minors—a tedious process. This difficulty of the immediate want of ready money embarrassed and worried me, and seemed insuperable; until M. Lafarge having told me that he was willing to pay a high interest and share the profits upon a loan, the investment appeared to me sufficiently advantageous to authorize my application to my family and friends to render us a service, and at the same time benefit themselves.

When, after these very serious conversations, M. Lafarge reduced his projects to figures,—an occupation in which I was unable to assist him, confessing, to my shame, that I had never known how to count, except on my fingers,—I sat by castle-building—dreaming, in short, of a journey to Paris. Ten years were required to execute all our plans and bring them into full operation. During each of those years we were to spend only one month in Paris; but, on the other hand, I was enabled to effect all sorts of improvement in our old mansion; I was to receive my friends and my family; I should have a daughter, or perhaps even a son, whom I would educate

à l'Anglaise, who should learn German, English, and Italian in his cradle, &c. After these ten years of reason, we were to engage trustworthy attendants and clerks to take charge of the business, while we passed alternately six months in Paris and six at Glandier. We would travel; I should marry my daughter; my son would be diplomatically employed; and M. Lafarge, elected deputy, would extend even into La Corrèze sparks of civilization and progress.

This career of industry and train of smiling future projects engaged my mind too absolutely for me to feel the void of my imagination, and I began to taste happiness in the common worldly acceptation of the word. I was become the friend and private counsellor of M. Lafarge, who was full of esteem and confidence, and paid me the most affectionate attentions. Too busy to be in love, he no longer required the ardent and impassioned speeches which I had never known how to speak—no longer exacted love with the law in his hand and the despotism of a creditor; and had, in short, become an excellent brother, whom I hoped in future to love a little more as a husband.

After the departure of M. Buffière, M. Lafarge sent to Paris for a head-clerk, whom he vaunted as a prodigy—why I could never discover. This was a young man named Denis, of rude manners, insidious voice, and sinister looks. I was astonished when, on accidentally asking him what forge-masters he had served, he replied that disastrous banking speculations having deprived him of his fortune, had driven him to accept a situation at a restaurant's, and that he had never studied any other business. My vexation at the incredible heedlessness that had apparently dictated a choice of such importance, was such that I could not forbear reproaching M. Lafarge for neglect: but he assured me, in reply, that he had long known the inflexible honesty and unconquerable perseverance and activity of this man, and that his ignorance of the manufacture was of no importance, as his only business was to keep the books. Though he could not convince me, he conquered part of my repugnance to M. Denis.

I am ignorant whether my prejudices infected my husband, but he determined not to entrust his hopes of a patent to his head-clerk; and he waited till the last minute before dictating to him his essay, my handwriting being too illegible, in its independence, to be presented to a minister. As for Madame Lafarge, she seemed to estimate the newcomer still more highly than her son, constantly inviting him to dine and spend the evening with us. It was, however, so revolting to me to meet so frequently at table a vulgar and ill-bred man, who could only be made to behave himself by being kept at a haughty distance, that I entreated my husband to request his mother to restrain the number of her invitations to M. Denis; and Madame Lafarge, resigning herself to entertaining her protégé in the inaccessible fastness of her own room, never forgave me for having contrived his banishment from the drawing-room.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Towards the end of October I experienced a great joy, —that of receiving, for the first time, a member of my family; the delight of extending hospitality to a beloved friend. My poor Glandier was yet inhabitable only in my dreams; still I did all that was humanly possible to render it agreeable to my guests. I studied to make them forget what was wanting, by anticipating their habits, tastes, and wishes; and unable in my mountain-solitude to surprise or delight them by city luxuries, I provided for them good fires, lovely flowers, and smiling faces.

After having travelled post over rocks, ravines, and deserts, whose soil had never been trodden save by foot of mule, M. and Madame de Sabatié arrived in the middle of the night, half-dead with fatigue, hunger, and jolting; after having entered the black gorge of Glandier as the mouth of the infernal regions, and fairly resigned themselves to go to the devil with cheerful hearts.

When I found myself again in my cousin's arms, after

the exchange of innumerable kisses, questions, and inquiring looks, my happy past seemed mingling with my future, and her presence seemed to convert my solitude into a home. The power of the affections is boundless: the enjoyments of life, its insupportable griefs, have their source in them; and I conceive that the joys of heaven can only consist in the empire of the affections, purified of the alloy of egotism and indifference that debases them on earth.

My cousin was suffering from fatigue; and apprehensive of a miscarriage. The days immediately following her arrival were therefore devoted to perfect repose and interminable conversations. What volumes we had to tell one another! Countless indispensable restrictions between a young wife and single woman had hitherto prevented this intimate exchange of thoughts, so sweet when completely reciprocal and entirely unreserved. She told me the story of her marriage,—how in six weeks she had seen, loved, adored M. de Sabatié; how she had found a lover in her husband; how immeasurably the joys of reality has surpassed those of her maiden dreams.

I related, in return, what had led, as a termination to my romantic and poetical imaginings, to an interested and worldly match, in which I had not consulted my heart. I told her the magnificence of the corbeille; described the noble expedients employed to shut my eyes till the solemnization of the marriage; then my awakening from my dream, my terror, the nervous grief that had closed "the happiest day of my life"—the journey, my disappointments, my letter to M. Lafarge and its frightful falsehoods, my despair, my treaty—M. Lafarge's generous conduct, my quiet actual life, and happiness from morning till night.

My cousin was in ecstacies at my account—overwhelmed me with questions, bantering, and encouragement; and eventually went the length, in her indiscreet joy, of talking to M. Lafarge of my letter, arguing the impossibility of its alleged facts of accusation, and ridiculing the credulity which had rendered him a complete dupe to the stratagem inspired by my maidenly terror, and the sight of my kingdom in ruins.

She absolutely wished to read the terrible letter; but

M. Lafarge having told her that it was burnt, she was compelled to satisfy herself with some of its more striking passages with which my memory supplied me. This little confidence, at my expense, established a strong intimacy between my husband and Madame de Sabatié. He was pleased, and put no bounds to his confidence in his new relative, who applied to him for all information that I refused to afford her, and, in return, completely tranquillized his jealousy of the past.

With one word I could have stopped my cousin's amiable levity; but intoxicated by her love and happiness, she might not easily have understood me, and I was averse to a full disclosure. Painful experience is necessary to understand that the heart, once set bleeding by the shock of the deceptions of life, although it may manifest the outward calmness of indifference, the wound inflicted is always painful at intervals, and can never be effectually healed.

Often, at the sight of the impassioned affection of my cousin and her Edward, I felt with sorrow the scaffolding of happiness and reason that I had raised about my heart give way. They sometimes added to the enjoyment of their love the pleasures awakened in them by beauteous skies, the face of nature, music and poetry. When I beheld their hearts thus beat in unison, with the same emotion and the same enthusiasm, to repress my tears I was compelled to smile, and ridicule a happiness that I could not help envying in secret.

These days of union fled as swiftly as they were agreeably spent. We took long walks, and had longer conversations. I invited to parties the most pleasant of our neighbours, to procure my fair cousin the pleasure of being admired, to amuse her by the sight of our country fribbles, and provide food for mirth during our long evenings. Madame de Sabatié was satisfied and pleased with all she saw; she exerted herself to please in return, and even achieved the conquest of my mother-in-law. Six months' sojourn at Thoulouse had made her understand the way of life and manners of the country; where a happy population, behind the progress of the century and the march of intellect, believe that virtue, good taste, and

propriety, exist only amongst them, and would regard as a revolution the least inroad upon their solitudes of enlightened civic refinement.

Soon to pleasures succeeded long and serious business-interviews. M. de Sabatié had received with his wife an estate near Thoulouse, worth, I believe, about three hundred thousand francs. Never quitting Paris, he was desirous of disposing of a property which suffered in his absence, and of investing the proceeds with a view to the augmentation of his income. M. Lafarge proposed to him that he should lend the money on a mortgage of his works; he showed him a statement of his position, similar to the one that had served as basis to our marriage-deed, and made him visit the fair and extensive domains, which he gave us all to understand, and which I believed, to belong to Glandier. Finally, he divulged to him his discovery, his hopes of a patent, and his gigantic project for the extension of his affairs.

My husband then proceeded to explain his want of a considerable advance of capital, indispensable in a country where all advantageous purchases are made for ready money; representing that nothing would be more easy than to raise a loan on mortgage in Paris, but that he was desirous of making one of my family participate the advantages of the investment; and offering to borrow two hundred thousand francs of Edward, at an interest of five per cent, and to give him, besides, a share in the profits of the projected improvement. He promised him, further, a salary of, I believe, ten thousand francs, to superintend the works which would be conducted in Paris by his clerks.

While our two husbands were calculating and making estimates, my cousin and I indulged delightful anticipations of those parts of the scheme that would affect our pleasures. She was to spend every summer with me at Glandier, and in the winter we were to dwell together in Paris; our pleasures were to be in common, and, our tastes being identical, our enjoyment would be doubled.

It was decided that M. Lafarge should set out at the same time as M. Sabatié; that the latter should introduce him to some persons of influence at the ministry of commerce; that they should finally settle the terms of their

partnership in Paris; and that if Edward should be unable to find at once a purchaser for his estate, he should furnish, from his wife's portion, funds for the most urgent expenses.

My cousin wished to take me with her, anticipating the joy of my family and friends at my unexpected return to spend six weeks among them. My husband also pressed me to accompany him; he was unwilling to leave me in solitude, and expected that I should be of assistance to him in the steps he would have to take to obtain his patent. I, however, resisted their entreaties; I overcame my own desire to accompany them, determined to deck my spousal wreath with one first flower of reason and wisdom.

The alleged motive of my refusal was the absolute necessity of my presence to superintend the business left in the hands of strange and unskilled clerks, and my wish to employ all the money I should have expended on the journey in embellishing my poor little home of Glandier: neither was my real motive less praiseworthy. Scarcely accustomed to my desert, I was unwilling to quit it before having introduced improvements which should endear it to me. I was not desirous of entering society with M. Lafarge, to expose him to comparisons unfavourable to him, and sad and mortifying to myself; I wished to re-enter it only protected by a confiding and solid affection. Fortified against myself, my resolution was unalterable; and I tranquilly awaited the approaching day of departure and separation.

Still it was a sorrowful day when it came. I accompanied them to Uzerche; and seated alone with my cousin in the carriage, I charged her with affectionate messages and tokens of remembrance for the dear and regretted friends whom she was shortly to meet. I looked at her long and steadfastly, in order to carry back her image into my solitude; in her I beheld all my family, all my friends, all my past. I embraced her to conceal the agitation that shook me; I spoke to her loudly and rapidly to distract my thoughts, to arrest the words of tenderness that rose to her lips, and that would have overpowered me if spoken. My husband had permitted us to set out unaccompanied, at the instance of his mother, who had last and confidential com-

munications to make to him previously to his departure. When he rejoined us near Vigeois, his sorrow at parting was so loud, and his promises, advice, and exactions so clamorous, that he almost made me forget my own grief and resign myself to the separation.

When, having reached Uzerche, and bidden them finally adieu, I beheld their carriage disappear, I felt it impossible to return to my apartment, and felt a choking sensation; and desiring one of my cousins to saddle his horse and my own, I galloped after the carriage, and reached it out of breath by the exertion. I was received with cries of surprise and joy; my friends would have made me accompany them in spite of my reason, but I spurred Arabska into a gallop, to avoid hearing their persuasions; and feeling my resolution restored by the cool breeze and the rapidity of my flight, after following them some time with my eyes, and waving with my hand a last adieu, I returned to Uzerche, without daring to turn my head for fear of yielding to the temptation of departing with the happy travellers.

M. Lafarge had made me promise not to return immediately to Glandier, but to pay a week's visit to a family of his acquaintance living at a pretty seat not far from Uzerche. The duty of concealing my grief, and tearing myself from my reminiscences to please my hosts, at the same time that it cost me much pain, gradually restored my reason and resolution.

I was welcomed with a cordiality which I then believed was sincere, but which was, in truth, nothing more than a speculation, and an investment of hospitality intended to return, for the winter evenings, a profitable revenue of commentaries, tattle, and scandal.

In this country, generally speaking, there is no study to give a visiter pleasure by flattering his habits and tastes; the only study is to discover his failings, with a view to gratify, at his expense, the rampant love of gossip and slander that rules predominant in society. I am at a loss to understand the pleasure taken in attacking the private life, honour, and character of a poor inoffensive guest coming in search of sympathy or amusement. Society—which is only an interchange of superficial

sentiments, in which we seek not to express our real thoughts, but to which we fly to forget them—society ought not to pass judgment but on that part of ourselves which we yield to it as an exchange for the poor pleasures it bestows. To raise the veil of private life, to spy out the mysteries of the heart, in order to proclaim them to the world, is a cowardly profanation of social intercourse —is oftentimes an infamous crime. Surely society itself offers a sufficiently vast field for riducule in its paraded vices and vanities. Why not laugh at the pretended man of wisdom courting an eulogium? at the old coquette who would have us discover grace and beauty in the wrinkles of her painted brow? Why not laugh to shame the prudes, the hypocrites, and unappreciated spirits, who, at every turn, drag their weakness into the sun? Laugh at these, censors; for the vices are born of you and for you, and the tribunal which they declare competent to flatter is still better fitted to unmask them, and hold them up to ridicule.

But I am digressing, though not far, from my subject. To return to the family at F——. Madame D—— I found to be a good-natured, kind creature, troubled with indigestion. M. D——, a rude boor, who cultivated his fields and suffered his mind to lie fallow, was an ill-tempered and dissatisfied being, only admiring nature in his fattest cattle. Several of their children were married: the only two at the farm were a daughter, ravenously fond of bread and butter, and a most agricultural son, who, after confirming his clownishness by a few months' residence in Paris, had married a fresh-coloured maiden, chosen for weight by his father, and who had been educated, accomplished, and fattened at Limoges.

In the bosom of this seemingly kind and affectionate family, I spent several quiet and happy days. In the morning I cut patterns, and gave instructions in millinery to the women-folk, and, to their unspeakable stupefaction, unfolded the novel mysteries of my trousseau; then I used to walk out with Madame D——, admiring her fine fruit-trees, and the excellent order and economy of her household arrangements. I listened to her with interest, and sought to profit by her example and lessons. In the

evenings I kept all the family dancing, while I played waltzes, quadrilles, and *bourrées*, on an old spinet that had survived the orgies of the regency, the tempests of the revolution, and the conquests of Napoleon—which had resounded to *Vive Henri Quatre* under the restoration, to the *Parisienne* after the three glorious days, and under my fingers vibrated with the melodies of the *Postillon de Longjumeau*. Retired to my room, I passed part of the night writing to M. Lafarge.

His absence had left a void in my heart; and the privation of his affectionate cares taught me their full value. The pleasures of life do not consist alone in the affections bestowed, but also in those received; and the country, however remote, in which one is loved, cannot long remain a land of exile.

I was tenderly affected day by day at the reception of impassioned letters from M. Lafarge. In vain I sought in my esteem traces of passion answering to his own; I felt indignant, and almost despised myself for the insensibility of my heart; and when I recalled to mind all the words of love, the noble disinterestedness, and the affectionate confidence of my husband, I rejoiced in the use of tender expressions which, received at a distance, would console him for my absence. In truth, when the night is not feared,—the long, dull night, so wearisome to those bound by law to love,—it is very easy to convert friendship, esteem, and gratitude, into a sincere and tender passion.

I spent a week at F———; and left it laden with messages and commissions for M. Lafarge. Every one was desirous of making and receiving presents for the approaching new year. The gentlemen ordered pins; the ladies bracelets and dresses. M. Gabriel D———, resolving to unite the useful and the agreeable—at once to improve the heart, mind, and manners of his young wife,—sent for a complete copy of all Paul de Kock's novels!

There is a mania for commissions in the country; and the belief prevails that all who depart for the capital are the proper commissioners of their relations, friends, and acquaintance, to bring them up to the fashions of the day by the outlay of a few centimes. An old aunt wants the

strongest and finest cambric-muslin at fifteen sous an ell, —it cannot be dearer, since her newspaper advertises calico at the same price; a female cousin is desirous of having a black Lyons silk dress of the finest quality at two francs nineteen sous a yard; while a young niece, who knows that bonnets are to be had at fifteen francs, wishes to have one at that price made by Mademoiselle Baudrand, whose style she has heard praised by the prefect's lady.

Previously to my return to Glandier, I stopped at Uzerche to intrigue for a few votes in favour of my uncle Pontier, who wished to be named member of the *conseil général* of his languishing department, and become its doctor, that he might prescribe for its moral diseases of overflow of stupidity and chronic barbarism. I could only console him under defeat, and save him from a patriotic desperation which would have impelled him heroically to destroy himself. I then proceeded to Vigeois, where M. and Madame Fleyniat detained me a day or two, to introduce me to the circle which constituted their little town the most elegant and animated in the department. Having been crammed with all the gossip of the place, I was shown the lions; but by an unlucky fatality, or a deplorable want of discernment, the "amiable" ladies all seemed to *me* eaten up with pretension, affectation, and silliness; while I was charmed by the kind and graceful hospitality extended to me by Madame Nauche, who won my interest by her lovely features and the chain of slanderous stories I had been told, to prejudice me against her.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

After this erratic life, I was delighted to return to my own quiet solitude, and enjoy the privilege of being merry without cause, or sad without having to give a reason. I would have employed myself in business, in the purchase of wood, and the regulation of the payments to be made

and received by the house; but seeing that my mother-in-law had completely engrossed these duties, performing them mysteriously in secret conferences with M. Denis, I willingly resigned to her the more embarrassing and responsible part she had taken upon herself, and gave all my attention to the forges, which interested me, and which I understood.

I therefore spent several hours every day at the works, impelled by a twofold motive. The foreman of the smelters, an intelligent and trustworthy young man, who was strongly attached to me, was the professed admirer of my faithful Clementine, and appeared to please her sufficiently well to make me think of fusing them: I became the young artisan's confidante, and learned that, besides inexhaustible and burning love, he possessed fifteen thousand francs and a profitable trade. Clementine would have preferred in her husband a little more wit and breeding than fell to the lot of her worthy Limousin adorer; in admiring his person, she lamented the Gothic cut of his coat. But upon my promising to polish him, she consented to reflect, and not repulse the love proffered by my protégé: and it was settled that in the spring Antonio should formally make his proposals; and that, with the aid of divine Providence, I should do my best to promote a wedding, and make two fond lovers happy.

The masons proceeded with their work under my directions; and the miners, in levelling the terrace, alighted upon some old armour and remains of sculpture, which pleasingly initiated me into the joys of the antiquary.

In the fine weather I had Arabska saddled, and taught her new steps and curvets on the turf in the meadow. When it was very fine, I took long rides in unknown directions, enjoying the pleasure, when we lost ourselves, of a laugh at the expense of my Parisian attendant's terror; for he heard no poetry in the howling of wolves at sundown, and preferred the high road to steep ravines untrodden by the foot of man or horse. This servant, the son of a former coachman of my father, was too careful of his neck to indulge the emotion of conquering an almost insurmountable difficulty; and veiling his cowardice beneath his attachment to me, implored me not to expose

my life in risking his, with an eloquence proportioned to the imminence of the danger.

After a few hours spent in company with Madame Lafarge, I seated myself in the evening at my piano. Sometimes I sang in merry mood the satirical arias of the "Barber of Seville;" and at others wept through "Norma" or Mozart's "Requiem," or the musical throes of Schubert; or with the "Huguenots" and "Semiramis," I became excited, and practised enthusiastically till the wan and cheerless rays of a December sun entered the apartment.

I sent every day to Uzerche for the letters. What pleasure equals the intimate exchange of thoughts, the reception of the ray of affection or love sent from afar to soothe in the heart the pangs of absence? In my opinion letters should be received as one would receive the absent writers—tête-à-tête, and comfortably seated by the fireside. Oh, the delight of a long look at the seal, previously to breaking it in haste; of the first kiss it tenders, and the last, which is ever the sweetest; of a deliberate reperusal of every word and sentence; of a careful consideration of what you are told, and what is perhaps intentionally suppressed; of participating joy, sorrow, or indignation; and of imprinting all into your soul, that you may live of the life that comes to mix with yours in defiance of time and space.

With these ideas, I was every morning tortured by my mother-in-law, who had ordered all letters to be delivered to her, bringing in mine, stationing herself before my bed, and, having first questioned me by her looks, watching me break each seal, reading in my eyes the contents of my letter, and then with a torrent of interrogations changing my pleasure into a fit of anger which I could with difficulty conceal from its object. If I read my letter aloud, it produced angry remarks on the love expressed for me, and the neglect with which she was now treated. When, to flatter her maternal jealousy, I skipped the passages expressive only of attachment to me, she began crying, because secrets were kept from her knowledge, and complained of my having estranged from her her son's affection. When, to gratify her, I handed her my letter to peruse at pleasure, summoning M. and Madame Denis,

the trio reckoned and discussed the kisses and expressions of tenderness sent me by my husband. Unable to bear this martyrdom, I desired my husband to include in each of his letters a detached page containing no loving messages or communications of importance to be handed over to his mother; and he complied, to the despair of Madame Lafarge, who, receiving her page as the sole reply to all her questions, devoured the rest of the missive with her looks and bitter thoughts.

She attempted, after her son's departure, to extend her inquisition over all the rest of my correspondence. "Here is a letter for you from Paris: who is it from? It looks like a gentleman's writing. It is very bulky: are you pleased? Perhaps it is from your sister? Do the *women* in Paris correspond with gentlemen?" To all these annoying queries I quietly replied, with indignant calmness, that coming from persons with whom she was unacquainted, the contents could not interest her; that I corresponded with all my old friends, regardless of the very unimportant distinction of sex. Finally, having reperused my letter while my mother-in-law confronted me like a gigantic note of interrogation, I deliberately burned it, and so destroyed in her all hope of satisfying her suspicious curiosity. Madame Lafarge never forgave in me this frank reserve. She denounced it to M. Lafarge, as he himself informed me; to her brother Raymond, who also defended me; and afterwards to others, who, virtuously scandalized like herself at my conduct, found ample matter for all sorts of slander and calumny. How much happier should I have been to share with my mother-in-law in her pleasures and vexations, in my own sorrows and my joys? How easy should it be for a wife to study the love and duty she has sworn to the son in the heart of the mother, who is the guardian angel of the childhood which is past, as the wife should be the consoling angel of the man!

After the first days succeeding his arrival in Paris,—after the gracious words of welcome, promises, confidential communications, and professions of readiness to serve, so sincere in those first days,—M. Lafarge saw each of his friends return to his business, habits, and pleasures, and found himself deserted, alone, and disheartened. Society

is merciless to those who seek in it supporters or protectors. It exacts from its votaries a boundless egotism,—necessary perhaps to follow its rapid whirl. It leaves not to the breathless victims in head and heart, which belong to it, the faculty of indulging thoughts or gaining friends; while it must be conceded that the selfishness of those who seek equals that of hoped-for patrons. The man of one idea would with it petrify those of all to whom he makes application. He is displeased with the ruling powers for not concentrating their solicitude on his one favoured notion, on which, according to him, depends the future prosperity and glory of the nation.

M. Lafarge intrigued against the age of gold to restore the age of iron. After having in vain preached to him patience, I counselled him to seek the way to his deputies', friends', and relatives' hearts through their appetites, and to put their good-will to the test by the truffles of Perigord. In obedience to his instructions, I wrote to all the persons of my acquaintance who could be of service to him, he telling me all it was necessary to explain and require. I frequently spent whole days in this disagreeable occupation. I knew not how to beg; and the part of solicitress, which it would have been impossible for me to play in person, was scarcely less revolting with a pen and paper. I tore one letter because it seemed too humble, another because it prayed too proudly, a third because the handwriting was too aristocratically illegible; in short, if my productions wearied my husband's great friends, I was, in expiation, myself the first victim of my own dulness. The impossibility of obtaining Madame de Sabatié's dower, compelling my husband to have recourse for a loan to strangers, completed my distress. My cousin, believing that she lost the chance of a profitable investment, was inconsolable; while I was not less afflicted for her, myself, for our realities, and our dreams.

In the midst of all this worry and irritation, I was often at a loss to understand M. Lafarge's conduct, and was miserable on finding him, with a view to his loan, resort to narrow thoughts and debasing actions. I had no objection to his making a thousand applications to the minister for a single favour; but for his private business, and that business a loan, I shrank from the idea of seeing him

basely cringe to one of our great kings of the bank. Bowing and flattery may be permissible perhaps to obtain an invitation to a ball from any of their greatnesses; but in affairs of interest, in which confidence is indispensable, all applications should be based on honour, right, and high character; and to bend the knee in order to borrow a little gold, is to give a man, with the license to despise, authority to superadd suspicion and refusal to his contempt of the borrower.

These ideas so bewildered my poor head, that no sophistry could calm my agitation. I felt with unspeakable anguish the moral obstacles that must incessantly oppose my wish to love and respect the man to whom I was united for life. I could only shut my eyes and pray, as I gradually comprehended the extent of the inferiority of the man whom fate had made my lord and master. My outraged soul fathomed in desperation the immensity of its irreparable misfortune, and struggled to retain an illusion which seemed about to disappear: it would have despoiled itself, that it might erect a pedestal to its master, to ennoble the worship which had been imposed upon it. In those moments of delusive pride I cried aloud, to stifle the voice of conviction, "This man is good—he is your superior; all about him is serious and useful, and agreeable to the usages of real life: he is your husband, and you love him. Not of him, but of the world and of the world's realities should you complain, for inflicting the first bitter pangs that attend the transition from your land of dreams and illusions to the duties and deceptions of actual life."

If I interrogate my conscience, it will bear witness for me that it never tolerated these revolts of my mind, and that I ever courageously sought to stifle them in the enthusiasm of fidelity and duty. In sincerity of heart, I forced myself to find the tenderest expressions in addressing my absent husband; I commanded my thoughts to be gentle and affectionate; then I sent them to M. Lafarge in my letters, as an expiation of my involuntary wrongs. Whenever I succeeded in imbuing my correspondence with tenderness and esteem, I joyfully consigned my epistle to the post; when, on the contrary, I fancied my sorrow and discouragement had spoken out in despite of myself, I was wretched and despairing: and not unfrequently, in repe-

rusing the expressions I had imposed upon my pen, overwhelmed with remorse at my well-intentioned hypocrisy, scalding tears would force their way, without, however, relieving my oppressed heart.

Madame Lafarge dwelt in her own room, almost constantly attended by M. Denis. I was entirely alone, and too happy to relieve my solitude by the presence of my charming cousin, Emma Pontier. This dear child had just finished her education; and her thoughts not being yet shut in by the materialism of existence, she sought with me friendship and a refuge for her illusions. Fortuneless, and well knowing that in the world her destiny would be to become the chief slave of some lord of the creation, her tender affections were elevated above this world. Like me, she had marked out a future for herself; but while her heart was lost in the boundless immensity it embraced, mine languished in the chains that bound it to earth. The days we spent together were agreeably occupied. We walked among the ruins, read Chateaubriand, or I played to her on the piano. The effect of harmony was all-powerful over the tender and susceptible organization of Emma. When the twilight came, and the darkness threw its large black veil over our vast saloon, I sung to her the romance of the "Abencérage," or the "Lac de Lamartine;" or sometimes one of the ballads of Schubert, in which spectres come forth from their coffins, and return to the earth to love, to pray, and to suffer. She would shudder, and lay her head on my shoulder to weep. Sometimes her emotion would infect me: I became afraid to listen to myself, and we nestled close to each other, not daring to rise even to ask for the lamp, which was needed to restore our courage.

During our evenings, we loved to listen to the recital of the supernatural adventures which my mother-in-law told with so much mystery and credulity; how it was the devil that stifled one of her children, and how an old monk roamed through one of the arcades of the grand corridor, chaunting the psalms of *la pénitence*. One night a phantom had kissed her on the forehead, in order to forewarn her of the death of her husband, which happened two days afterwards. Another time, during one of the frosty and tempestuous nights of winter, she had

seen light and plaintive ghosts come and extend their skeleton-hands before her hearth, regarding it with their vacant eyes, which were weeping icy tears.

One evening, pressing letters from M. Lafarge having required it, I sat up writing till two in the morning; while Emma, who had not wished to go to bed before me, made Clementine show her all the favourite dresses of my *corbeille*. Suddenly my gentle little friend's wishes induced me to put on once more my wedding-dress, my veil, my laces, and my white crown. I was becoming sad, and began to reckon in my heart all the illusion which had withered since I had deposited, on quitting the church, that virgin apparel, when the compliments of Emma, and the enthusiasm of Clementine, always in admiration before her mistress, turned my mind upon the vanity and the futile and superficial part of my remembrances. Wishing to continue our conversation longer, we had Emma's bed brought beside mine. All at once our lamp went out, and the flames of the chimney played in a thousand extravagant reflections on the angles of the furniture of the saloon. All the legends we had heard were recalled to our minds.

"I am afraid," said Emma, pressing my hand.

I also entertained a slight fear; but, assuming incredulity and strength, in order to calm her, I was desirous of proving to her how easily the marvellous may be always explained. I spoke to her of magnetism, of somnambulism, &c. Meanwhile the wind arose, and moaned through the dilapidated corridors; the cries of the night-birds diminished my courage; and the howling of the wolves, which we heard in the distance, froze our hands, which clasped each other convulsively. The fire, which was nearly extinguished, no longer enlightened more than the angles of the piano, which looked like an immense coffin. Emma shuddered, and her teeth chattered. I was a little stronger, but my heart was shaken with presentiments. My poor little cousin, unable any longer to reason with her fears, came to seek refuge with me, and with our two heads hidden under the counterpane, we awaited the morning in trembling silence. At length, when the first streaks of day were announced by the bell of the *angelus*, our heads issued from their white prison

—our eyes, still affrighted, met, and we exchanged a long burst of laughter at the remembrance of our mortal terrors.

Next day, at breakfast, we related to my mother-in-law all that our imaginations had seen and heard in that gloomy night. In order to embellish our narrative, we would fain have vaunted of the visit of some phantom-monk; but the deception seemed a little too gross, and we were both scrupulous of adding another superstition to the many which already disturbed the solitude of poor Glandier.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Madame Lafarge, meanwhile, jealous of the excessive tenderness exhibited towards me by Emma, sought to employ a thousand means to detach her from my heart. She told her of the letter of the fifteenth of August, and the sad scenes of my arrival, metamorphosing into reality the love that I had alleged for a *young man*. She told her I had seen him at Pompadour, and afterwards at Glandier; and made, in short, so pleasant a *mêlange* of absurdities and black calumnies, that I saw a cloud on the affection of my cousin; to whom I gave all my confidence, for the purpose of justifying myself. The latter saw immediately that she might continue to love me; and she did love me the better for what I had suffered, and for what I sometimes still suffered.

My uncle Pontier came often to see me, and testified his pleasure at the friendship I displayed towards his daughter; but to his sweet, amiable, enthusiastic conversation there had succeeded in him a preoccupation, a discouragement, a sadness—profound, ardent, and continuous—which afflicted and affrighted me. One evening he appeared more unhappy than usual. He made me sing all the airs that he loved, spoke to me of absence, of the absent, of the sacredness of remembrances; then, after having embraced me, he took leave, recommending

to me his children; and the next day I learnt that he had departed for Algiers. I wept bitterly for that only man who had understood, loved, and adopted me in my new family; and I wrote to him, pledging myself to love and protect his children, and telling him all the thoughts, all the regrets, which I would preserve towards him until his return.

I was sometimes visited by M. de T———,with whom I was pleased to be able to exchange a few ideas. I gained instruction from his good taste and experience, to assist me in forming the plantations which I contemplated for the spring; and I made him write in my album the pretty verses which he was accustomed to make, in order to abridge the tediousness of the ride from St. Martin to Glandier. I had formed the project of going to pass a couple of days at his château, and to make an ample acquaintance with Madame de T———. A period of execrable weather, and the famished rats which had *improvised* a dinner from the buttons of my *Amazone*, caused me to put off, and subsequently to abandon, that prospect of reunion, of which I had need to enable me to dispel a thousand wearisome preoccupations.

I received from M. Lafarge letters of despair. The business relating to his patent was going forward very slowly, though promising certain success; but the loan, which proceeded more slowly still, offered difficulties which he feared would be insurmountable. The pompous speculations, which several years before had ruined so many fortunes, had rendered the bankers distrustful and intractable. As it was difficult for them to obtain certain information concerning the value of Glandier, on the soundness of the mortgages of which they wished to secure their advances, they had all refused after more or less excuses. I sent an unlimited power of attorney to endeavour to sell Villers-Hellon, or to raise a loan upon my dower. I preached patience and courage to M. Lafarge, and endeavoured to put tender and affectionate words into my letters, in order that at night they might lull to sleep the deceits and fatigues of the day.

He had passionately desired my portrait. Before his departure, he had wished to have it taken; but time had failed him, and he had not known where to find a young

girl, who had been recommended to him as having passable talent. Desirous of realizing the wish of the poor absentee, and to soothe the discouragement and impatience which daily gained upon him, I sallied forth in search of the fair Limousine. She was a young old maid, who appeared very sanctified, and whose words were somewhat sticky with the honey of flattery; but she was well informed, unfortunate, and had, in place of genius, a box of colours and brushes, assurance, and the style of a sign-board painter. She kept me sitting for three weeks in order to bring forth from a large blue sky a benevolent red and white physiognomy, which, having like me a mouth, a nose, two eyes, and dark hair, of course ought to resemble me in the most striking manner;—and was also not unlike one of those great chubby figures, which issue from a horn of abundance, and smile, from over the doors of pastry-cooks' shops, at the little children of the Rue St. Denis.

Madame Lafarge was so enthusiastic at sight of my portrait, and Mademoiselle Brun regarded it near and at distance, with a smile of such proud satisfaction, that I believed with a sigh that my vanity had deluded me, and that I was quite as ugly as my picture. I wished, nevertheless, to hazard a slight remark to Mademoiselle Brun on the ideality of the tints of lilies and roses which she had flatteringly substituted for the tolerably yellow verity of my complexion; but our artist made me observe that a sprightly rose suited much better than a pale tint with a blue sky; and Madame Lafarge felt assured that her son would be doubly pleased on seeing his wife so full of health, freshness, and *embonpoint*. I was silenced, and it was agreed that the *chef-d'œuvre* should not be retouched.

At the moment of his departure for Paris, I had requested M. Lafarge to send me a little cake from the shop of the celebrated Felix; not that I indulged myself in any allusion concerning the state of staleness and dryness in which it must arrive, but delighting myself in idea with a fête which I was desirous of offering to my recollections of gourmandizing and of youth.

Formerly my cousins and I were accustomed to appoint as a rendezvous the Passage des Panoramas, where we

might shake each other's hand, and exchange our little secrets of the evening before, while our governesses, forgetful of us, were enjoying the cakes of the renowned pastry-cook.

M. Lafarge had appeared to comprehend my desire. I wished to remind him of it, and to afford him a similar pleasure to that which he was to procure for me, by adding to the parcel containing my portrait, some little cakes and chestnuts of his dear Limousin. It was agreed that Madame Lafarge, whose reputation for pastry was colossal, and who was not accustomed to concede to any one the grand work of making side-dishes, should take charge of the confection of the cakes, and that on the day when M. Lafarge would receive them at Paris, she should make some others to be eaten by our colony. That second part of the project, which was entirely my own, seemed to me charming, original, and I had the pleasure of a child in thinking of a supper of which the partakers, separated by a hundred leagues, should thus become again united in thought and in heart. Knowing that my sister would be at Paris, I desired M. Lafarge to invite her to our reunion; I even invited Madame de Buffière to that little fête; but she answered me, that being with child, she could not undertake the journey, yet promised to make at Faye a third portion of that reminiscent tea-party.

At Glandier the evening was exceedingly gay. We devoted music, conversation, and our thoughts, to the honour of the absent. I had made all the workmen and domestics of the house partake of our fête; and while in the saloon we took a cup of tea to the welfare and return of M. Lafarge, at the office uproarious toasts were drunk to his health and to the success of his patent.

M. Lafarge was enchanted with my attention in sending him my portrait, He found it sufficiently ugly to recompense my self-love for its abnegation, and so delighted with it that my patience was amply repaid, by the long words of affection and gratitude, for the long hours of weariness which it had been necessary for me to endure to have it taken. My kindly little idea of the supper had been unsuccessful. My husband told me, that on the evening of the arrival of the packet, being obliged to pass part of the night from home, he could not eat more than a mouthful of the

cakes ; that he had returned suffering much from pains in the stomach ; and that he was put to bed with frightful headache and vomiting. This intelligence disquieted me for an entire day without reason ; as I learnt on the next that a few cups of lemonade had calmed that slight indisposition, which had been much less violent than those which had so often alarmed me at Glandier.

After having finished my portrait, Mademoiselle Brun afforded me a surprise by commencing that of my niece. It was a very long affair, and exhibited an amiable attention ; so I invited her to remain with me till I should be able to take her to the house of Madame Buffière, whose portrait she was also to paint, and with whom I was to pass a fortnight after the return of M. Lafarge.

Mademoiselle Brun seemed unhappy. Her family was nearly indigent—she had no friends ; she recalled these circumstances incessantly ; and I offered to her from pure kindness, my hospitality and interest. In other respects she did not in the least disturb the busy solitude of my days, seldom quitting the chamber of my mother-in-law, who overwhelmed her with flatteries, friendship, pancakes, and strong coffee. I was astonished at the impassioned affection which Madame Lafarge had inspired in Mademoiselle Brun, when I learned that she wished her to marry an old gentleman, rich, and a widower, whose name I forget, but who resided at Excideuil, not far from Faye. My sister-in-law had a half-share in the plot, into which I was in nowise initiated.

About that period there occurred to me a very painful scene with Madame Lafarge. She had undertaken to procure the legalization of an act indispensable to her son for his loan. I know not by what chance, when she sent it to me for signature, I had the curiosity to read the document, and I could not express all that I experienced of torment, grief, and indignation, on finding that, instead of the power of attorney, I was reading a will, written in my name, and which went to alter all my wishes and all my sentiments. It was impossible for me to doubt. My mother-in-law had violated the will which I had placed under the safeguard of her honour ; she had submitted my most secret thoughts to a man of law ; had charged him to legalize wishes which were not mine ; had sought to pass

my fortune into the hands of her daughter's children, of strangers, desirous that not one of the thoughts and affections of my heart should survive me, and that all those whom I had loved should doubly weep me, in believing that I had been chilled by forgetfulness before being iced by death. It was an infamy. After having speculated upon my marriage, was it still necessary to speculate on my death? A terrible idea passed through my soul. In the same bed in which I nightly reposed, another wife, young, confiding, and isolated, like me, from all her friends, had come to her death, having signed a will which despoiled her family. Had she, too, been dealt falsely with? had she been a victim?

"My God, my God, have pity!" I cried, throwing myself on my knees. At that moment, my mother-in-law, who had ascertained her blunder, and had hoped that I had sent back the paper without reading it, entered my chamber.

"I know all," I said to her, in a voice which trembled with emotion and despair. "I know that you have violated all that is most sacred—the secrets of death. I know that you have wished to plunder my sister—that you have sought to make me give the lie to my affections and to my heart in that awful moment when we depart from life. Providence has disclosed to me your snares; they will be henceforth useless. Yes, I will make a will —I will send it to my sister—I will give her this time all that it is possible for me to give her; and if I am soon to die, my faithful Clementine shall not quit my pillow, but shall preserve my last agony from violence and craft."

"Marie, Marie!" exclaimed Madame Lafarge; "I implore you not to disinherit Charles. He knows nothing of my attempt."

"I will believe so—I have need to believe it; but my resolution is not the less unalterable."

"Marie, I entreat you, forget it all. Speak not of it to my son; he will never forgive me, though it is for his interest I have done it."

"It will be impossible for me to forget; but I promise you that I will not speak of it to your son. You ought

not to blush before him, Madame. Not forgetfulness, but silence and forgiveness."

"But if you have a child, will you dispossess that for your sister?"

"A child? Oh, if God should bestow upon me that treasure, can you believe that all my fortune, my whole existence, my sole solicitude, all that is me or mine, will not be devoted to it?"

"Well, Marie, you have been unjust; for I have forged that other instrument but under the persuasion that you will have that child."

"It is impossible."

"I, however, am convinced of it; I know it."

"But I have been told that certain symptoms are requisite, which I have not."

"Those symptoms prove nothing for a first conception. Your eyes are sunken; you are sick at heart, have an invincible repugnance for some kinds of food, and your figure is less slender and less flexible. I tell you from my olden experience that you are with child."

I was confounded at that revelation of Madame Lafarge: I was unable to believe her, yet dared not interrogate her farther. My inexperience was immense, absurd: I racked my poor head to no purpose. At length, after exciting myself and stupifying my imagination for several days—after having heard it repeated in my ears a thousand times that I was already greatly changed, and very ostensibly enlarged in size,—I believed in a miracle, and entertained the hope of being promoted to the dignity of a mother by the grace of God.

My tears were dried up by that sweet hope. I asked a thousand questions, and opposed a thousand arguments against the convictions of my mother-in-law. I had need that she should reply to the former with her matronly experience, while she victoriously combated the latter. My hopes of having a *little girl* already so fully occupied my heart, that it chased thence all rancour.

I did not dare to speak of my happiness to M. Lafarge. It seemed to me that I might lose my bliss in believing it; I became incredulous for the purpose of being convinced of a deception, and made vows to all the saints that they might change the impossible into the possible.

All my thoughts, all my actions, were already concentrated on the dear little addition to myself. I no longer mounted on horseback, no longer wore stays; I caused all my dresses to be enlarged, in order that my waist might expand without impediment, and I already occupied myself in making baby-linen with Clementine, and arranged for my infant's education with Mademoiselle Brun. I would not sing, nor even read, except romances and works which spoke of little children: I had a foretaste of the terrestial paradise. My little *Jacqueline* was so pretty: I dreamed that she was so fair, so rosy. She had black hair, blue eyes, the mouth of the little king of Rome, as much of heart as the angels, and an infinitude of kisses to answer to mine.

Beautiful little Jacqueline, born of my dreams, never to come upon this earth, do not seek for life from another mother! Remain in heaven dear child, that I may regain you there! Be one day the recompense of all the agonies which it has been my lot to bear in passing through the world!

This settled idea, which recurred to me day and night, was for me a blessing. I had during the same time a thousand imperceptible vexations, which harassed my life with their petty wounds; and I required to have love in my heart to make me forget them awhile.

M. Lafarge seemed to grow more and more disheartened. He was seized with the *mal du pays*. He had tried all the bankers of Paris without realizing his loan, and said he was wearied and suffering; he feared that he should fall sick at a distance from us. The forge did not prosper; the labourers came to complain to me of the incapacity of Denis, who allowed the charcoal to fail. I sent around us to all the woods where it was sold, without being able to purchase any for our consumption. MM. Buffière and Maynaud, who had promised M. Lafarge to superintend his business, scarcely ever set foot at Glandier; and at last Denis had sent away the chief clerk. Feeling himself supported by my mother-in-law, he ordered all things as master; was impertinent towards my domestics, and imperious with the workmen out of doors. He even went so far as to send away my masons, and the labourers who were employed upon my garden.

He moreover drank, passed his time in mysterious journeys, killing with fatigue all the horses in the stables, of which he accused my servants, and had even the hardihood to write that calumny to Paris. When I received the letter of M. Lafarge, which told me of that accusation, I sent for Denis, and gave him to understand that I would not suffer spies around me, and that at the first false report I heard again, I should desire his master to dismiss him. He excused himself, and sought to throw the calumny upon M. Buffière, with a base and false humility which changed my anger into contempt.

I could have wished to tell M. Lafarge every thing concerning the selfishness of his brother-in-law, the impertinences and disorders of Denis; but fearing to add my annoyances to his, I forbore; urged his return with all my prayers and desires, and, though counting the days, endured in silence. All these vexations irritated my nerves, and made me timid. In the night I was afraid, and had the foreman of the labourers and my own domestic to sleep at my door, while Clementine never quitted my chamber.

The diamonds of Madame de Léautaud had considerable effect in making me afraid of robbers. Having been a long time without intelligence of Marie, I was fearful that the state of her health had obliged her to follow the advice of her physician, who, in the spring, had threatened to send her to winter at Pau, far from the frosts and fatigues of the world. I had written to her at the moment of M. Lafarge's departure for Paris, to request of her to point out what ought to be my conduct; to tell her that my husband knew her secret, that he was at her disposition, with a devotion as absolute, as discreet, as mine, either to return or sell the diamonds in concert with her. Not having yet received her answer, which was to decide my irresolution, I attributed her silence to absence. I then desired M. Lafarge, who was to be introduced to Madame de Montbreton, to learn if Madame de Léautaud was at Paris. My husband was some time before he could relieve my uncertainty, Madame de Montbreton not having left Corcy till the end of December, and M. Lafarge consequently not having been able to see her until then.

M. Lafarge informed me that Madame de Léautaud was at Paris; and he requested me to propose to my friend, in case she should not immediately require the full value of the diamonds, to allow the surplus to remain in our hands at ten per cent interest. He told me that whatever sum it might be, it would be to him of great service, to enable him to purchase at the moment some wood which the managers of the Pompadour stables, I believe, were going to sell for cash, in our neighbourhood. I confess that it was painful to me to become the interpreter of this request to Marie; nevertheless, I did as he desired. Having given all the trouble of that matter to M. Lafarge, I was unable to refuse making, in his name, a proposition which might be so easily rejected, if it were inconvenient or disagreeable to Madame de Léautaud. That unfortunate little box of diamonds, confided to my care, and in a castle without gates, oppressed me horribly. I was only reassured by the impossibility that it could be stolen or sold without discovery. Fortunately they were not entirely dismounted, and I knew from Madame de Léautaud that their description had been given, by the chief of the police, to all the jewellers of Paris, and that M. de Léautaud had taken all the steps which were necessary on that subject.

CHAPTER L.

The 1st of January was approaching, and I did not expect M. Lafarge for three weeks. I was deeply afflicted, for all was growing worse and worse around me. The absences of Denis became every day more frequent. He passed every night in mysterious rides. Our workmen threatened to engage with the proprietor of some forges—our neighbour and rival. In fact, not only did M. Buffière not assist us with his presence or advice, but, notwithstanding the express injunctions of his brother-in-law to the contrary, he had made a trial, at his own house, of the new method of fabrication, which had obtained complete success.

M. Buffière, and, above all, his partner Magnaud, spoke with feelings of envy, far from fraternal, of our future wealth, and took it very ill that I should exhibit my astonishment on learning that, contrary to the desire of M. Lafarge, he had made trial of our discoveries, and thus deprived my husband of the first enjoyment of a success which he had paid for so dearly during the last six weeks. This information, which I could not avoid communicating to my husband, and a loan of twenty-five thousand francs which my agent had procured for him, for the 31st of December, hastened his return. I received a letter which, in promising me his presence, and my new-year's gifts for the 3d of January, delighted me, and relieved my heart from the presentiment of evil which had for a long time oppressed it.

Though he had been successful in his demand for the patent, M. Lafarge seemed to me very sad. He spoke of the griefs of his absence, without alluding to the pleasures of his return. A sentence of his letter ran thus; "I shall arrive early in the morning; I wish to see you the first, alone, even without my mother—contrive that it may be so." That sentence having been read by Madame Lafarge, who, in her eagerness to learn the news, had opened the letter during my walk to the forge, she was indignant, and made me understand, by her bitter words, that she considered me capable of desiring to monopolize the mind of her son, and to withdraw from her his affections; to which, however, she would not submit, but would rather sit up the whole night, in order to see him before I did.

It was under these agreeable circumstances that I commenced the year. For the first time in my life, new-year's day came to me without the kisses or good wishes of those I loved; and when I bent my knees to pray, I shed tears of bitterness, which could only be assuaged by the thoughts of that dear little child, of which I dreamed as a hope and as a blessing. Clementine first, and then our domestics and the labourers, came to wish me a happy year. I had prepared for each a little present; and I presented to myself a new-year's gift in the joy of putting a smile on the lips of all around me. Grief, which increases at the sound of joys that have become to it as

strangers, is consoled and forgets itself at the sight of those same joys when they are the work of its solicitude, and we become almost happy in giving happiness to others.

Madame Fleyniat came to pass the first days of the year at Glandier, and brought to me her litttle girl, a charming child, greatly spoiled, very pretty, and exceedingly mischievous, who loved me much, and told me so in a *petite* style, which was quite original.

In his last letter, M. Lafarge had informed me that he had not yet obtained the money from M. Legris, on the receipt of which his return depended; and he despaired of being with me so early as he desired. It was, therefore, a perfect surprise to me when I was awakened by him on the morning of the 3d. When I saw him smile and shed tears in kissing me on his return, I was frightened at the change in him. Clementine, whose bed was near mine, also asked him immediately if he was ill. He told us that his stomach pained him; that during the latter portion of his stay at Paris he had been obliged to be on horseback day and night; that he had constantly, when travelling a sickness of heart and stomach, and had taken nothing till he reached Limousin, when a little broth had caused him to vomit violently. I wished to prepare for him a cup of tea, but he refused.

After having expressed to my husband my joy at seeing him again, I put a thousand questions to him concerning his business, my family, his health, and my friends. He told me that he had brought back the patent; procured a loan from the firm of Martin, Didier, and Delamarre; that he had for me a mass of presents, letters, and affections; and a delicious pin, in gold and turquoise, from Madame de Montbreton, who had been charmed with him. In the letter which she had sent for me, through M. Lafarge, Madame de Montbreton told me, after many protestations of intimate friendship, that she had sent me an ivy branch, bearing the motto, "I die where I attach myself."

In the midst of all these inquiries and answers, M. Lafarge appeared sad and abstracted. I remarked this to him, and asked him, laughing, if he had left his heart at Paris. Instead of answering me, he asked me, sharply,

who it was that had posted letters at Uzerche, addressed to Count Ch——.

"I know not," I replied; "I can only tell you that it was not I."

"If you have written to him, I entreat you not to conceal it from me."

"If I had wished to maintain a second affection and a blamable correspondence, should I have confided my secret to you? should I have told you even the name of him I had loved, and wished to forget on becoming your wife?"

"You are right; but still I am assured of it."

"That I have written to M. Ch——?"

"Nearly so."

"Then it is an infamous calumny, or a singular coincidence. I require that you will investigate the subject. If you unjustly suspect me, I cannot place in you a friendly confidence. You may watch over my conduct—you may interrogate me concerning my actions; but I will permit no one to establish a system of espionage and accusation between us."

"You well know that I love you more than I love them. I believe you; but confess that M. de T—— has paid his court to you during my absence."

"He has addressed verses to me, and some compliments; nothing more."

"But you have written to him?"

"Yes; you know that I wished to effect a marriage between one of my cousins and one of his friends. I wrote to him every time that a letter from my aunt rendered it necessary to obtain further information, or brought me a new answer."

"But in Limousin the women never write."

"I am not a Limousine: and could you never have loved me without that essential qualification?"

"But it may probably be converted into slander."

"What matter? And if you are above those petty provincialisms, I thank Heaven, and despise what others may say."

Altogether our conversation, which continued for two hours on these distrusts, rumours, and suspicions, fully acquainted me with the nature of the letters which had

been written against me during those two months of absence, with the torments and trials which were reserved for me in the time to come. Nevertheless, I was still beloved by M. Lafarge. A word, a look, easily destroyed the scaffolding of calumnies raised with such exceeding cost against me; and I did not despair of overcoming both the hatred and wickedness of which I was the object.

During the interchange of thoughts, explanations, and apologies, which succeeded to the suspicions of M. Lafarge, my mother-in-law came three or four times to knock at the door; but it was locked, and we did not answer. I afterwards learned that Madame Lafarge, who had watched for her son all the morning, was indignant at learning that he had crossed the river, come over the wall of the enclosure through a breach, and entered my chamber without passing through the avenue, and thus without being perceived by her. I understood now that he had required to see me alone in order to tell me his griefs and suspicions. I was affected, was grateful for that frank explanation; I triumphed in my self-love; and it was not till about noon that I reminded him of the propriety of going to embrace his mother. He returned a few minutes afterwards, so fatigued that he desired to go to bed, and wished me to concede to him my chamber, inasmuch as I could there watch near him more conveniently, and could play him the airs he had not heard so long.

Scarcely was M. Lafarge installed in my apartment, when he was seized with vomiting. His uncle, M. Fleyniat, somewhat of a doctor, attributed his sickness to the journey, and ordered him some orangeade. I made him a cupful; and he felt much better after taking it.

I passed all that day beside the bed of the poor traveller, who showed us the famous patent, and received the enthusiastic felicitations of all of us with great joy. He wished me not to quit his pillow; overwhelmed me with tender words, saying that he had brought me his success for a new-year's gift; that I had inspired his fine and valuable discovery; and that all the new iron should be marked with the cipher of Marie; and then he covered my hand with a thousand kisses of gratitude.

I had caused to be engraven at Paris a stamp in

malachite, bearing the forge-hammers, and a motto of my invention. It was our arms of *noblesse industrielle*. That mark of attention enchanted M. Lafarge. He exhibited it to his mother and to his uncle, repeating to them,

"See how she has shown her love for me? How good she is! How her thoughts were with me during my absence!"

Madame Lafarge assumed a grumbling, discontented air, and seemed greatly annoyed at the pleasure for which her son rendered me so many thanks.

After the departure of our neighbours, M. Lafarge, remaining alone with me, interrogated me concerning the others, and the occurrences which had taken place during his absence. I told him all my torments and griefs; I told him of the negligent desertion of his brother-in-law, the impertinences and inattention of Denis, the dissatisfaction of the workmen, and the want of charcoal which had compelled them to shut up the forge. He appeared highly mortified and painfully abstracted, telling me that the labourer, Joseph Astier, had also complained to him on his arrival; but that he would restore good order, in place of all these abuses of authority and confidence.

Not wishing to allow me to descend to dinner, M. Lafarge entreated his mother to let it be served for me at his bedside. He seemed anxious to make reparation for the days lost amid the sorrows of his absence. They brought me the wing of a truffled fowl: my husband wished to taste a small truffle, which I held to him on the end of my fork. Unfortunately that was a slight imprudence, which made him more sick, and towards ten o'clock he had several vomitings.

The night was calmer. The next day our invalid suffered only from excessive weakness. M. Denis wished to speak with him: he sent him away two or three times, entreating us to leave him that day to repose, and to prevent any one from speaking to him of business. He merely directed his confidential labourer to go to Uzerche, to seek a portmanteau containing money, and to cause his luggage to be forwarded.

At the hour of luncheon some biscuits were served in the saloon, when I found myself with Mademoiselle Brun beside my husband. It was necessary therefore to share

our little repast; and he wished for a spoonful of perfumed whipped cream.

M. Buffière arrived in the meantime. He was closeted a long time with his brother-in-law; and that interview appeared to have horribly fatigued and depressed M. Lafarge. At five o'clock, the vomitings returned with greater violence and frequency than on the preceding day. I wished to send in search of the physician of Brives; but this my mother-in-law opposed, and made choice of M. Bardon, whom I knew for a very good friend and a very bad doctor.

Meanwhile the complaints of M. Lafarge began to disquiet me; and if M. Buffière reassured me in some measure, by saying that it was merely a simple indisposition, and that his brother-in-law was in the habit of exaggerating the slightest suffering, Madame Lafarge had sinister ideas, which chilled the blood in my veins. She feared that her son had been poisoned at Paris by his enemies. She related to me the death of her husband, who, dining at the house of M. N———, had been poisoned by a rival in a piece of almond-cake, and had exhibited the same symptoms as those of our sufferer.

At two in the morning M. Bardon arrived. I took him aside, and told him my disquietude, and the frightful suspicions of my mother-in-law. He laughed heartily at these chimerical fears; assured me that there was not a symptom which might give consistency to those formidable ideas; that the real complaints of M. Lafarge were spasms of the heart, and inflammation of the stomach; that the affection which had caused the death of his father had been natural, as he had attended him himself; and that the bewildered imagination of Madame Lafarge alone could suspect such a crime. I made him explain to me the proper treatment to combat these sad spasms, wishing to have it scrupulously followed. It was ordered that leeches should be applied; that the invalid should be interdicted from cold drinks; and that emollient soothing syrups should be mixed in his barley-water.

I afterwards talked for a long time with M. Bardon of the early education of children; of the "Emile" of Rousseau, which he had lent me some days before, and which had awakened in my heart a thousand new feelings, at once deep and powerful.

CHAPTER LI.

While we were thus passing the night in conversation, the rats held their nocturnal revels over our heads, awaked M. Lafarge from his light slumber, and rendered him very impatient. M. Bardon inquired if I had not endeavoured to get rid of those noisy and destructive guests. I told him that I had already made a mixture of *ratsbane*, flour, and water, for them, without its having produced any exterminating result. He advised me to add to the flour and poison some sugar and butter, promised even to send me some maize-flour ; and knowing that I had no more *ratsbane*, he gave me a small note to enable me to procure some arsenic at Uzerche.

The chagrin of finding himself chained to his bed, when a thousand important occupations claimed his attention, augmented the sufferings of M. Lafarge. He was impatient, depressed, gloomy. He avoided, with a sort of terror, any tête-à-tête with his mother and his brother-in-law, who spoke to him constantly of business. He seemed pleased while I lulled him, in words of affection, with the dreams and projects to come. He was so exceedingly ill, that I alone had the right of not being dismissed into very satanic company every time it was necessary to make him take the medicine prescribed by his doctor. His mother, above all, had the misfortune of rendering him impatient ; and he would only leave to her the care of preparing a multitude of barley-waters, potions, and cataplasms, and of inspecting before her fire a regiment of coffee-pots, the contents of which he despised, notwithstanding the directions given, and our entreaties.

The attentions of Mademoiselle Brun seemed agreeable and useful to the invalid. I asked her therefore to delay her departure for Faye a few days. She consented most readily, and I was grateful ; for it was consenting to associate herself with our fatigues, with our sick-bed inquietudes, with the preoccupation to our days, and the restlessness of our nights.

All my conversations with my husband discovered to me the jealousy and calumnious disposition of his mother. Not only did they dare to misconstrue my actions, but to attribute some to me which were entirely false: to the numerous anxieties of M. Lafarge's business, they had added doubt, suspicion, and uncertainty insupportable for the mind and cruel to the heart.

Consequently, in finding me innocent of their odious imputations, more confiding than before, more loving, because he suffered, and quite happy at seeing him again, M. Lafarge showed deep joy. He said to me, "I entreat you to show your love for me in their presence; let them hear your pleasant words, and witness your kind attentions." And he repeated to his mother, "See how good she is—how she loves me—how happy I am. You must therefore love her. Embrace her, to thank her for the happiness she has conferred on me."

At other times, a jealous suspicion passed across his brow; he interrogated me with a short, hard, distrustful voice; then he begged pardon; he saw that I was wounded, and humiliated himself, relating, in his excuse, all their treacherous insinuations.

I would have remained ignorant of that malevolence which concealed itself in darkness to calumniate me. It needed all my husband's sufferings to restrain the violence of my indignation, to defer an explanation, and make me preserve a silence which almost stifled me, and appeared to me as cowardly as degrading.

When I approached my mother-in-law, I involuntarily recoiled; her honeyed and false words made my heart revolt; my brow burnt and quivered when her lips touched it.

I own I triumphed ungenerously at her son's exclusive preference for me. I joyed to mark his eyes seeking me, while he answered with indifference to the questions of his mother, who had driven me from the chamber. I enjoyed the words of love he lavished on me before her; the readiness with which he took the drink from my hands, when he had refused it from hers. I showed her my power; I showed her the price of those kisses which I had denied to jealousy, but granted to penitence.

Fool that I was! I staked my life against a jest. Strong

in my conscience and his love, I myself evoked the hatred which was to dig my tomb.

At his second visit, M. Bardon found the inflammation in the throat more intense; M. Lafarge had great difficulty in swallowing, swelling of the glands, and a violent determination of blood to the head. He applied leeches, blooded him slightly, and injected a little alum into the throat. This occasioned excruciating pain to the patient, which was followed by a burning, sharp, continuous taste in the mouth.

M. Bardon having left the chamber, M. Lafarge told me he was sure that they had made him swallow vitriol by mistake; that he felt a fierce and insupportable inward fire; that M. Bardon kept a bad and disorderly dispensatory, out of which he served his patients; and that he had deceived himself.

I in vain tried to soothe his pain by some garglings with cold water; and then, greatly troubled with his inquietude, I sought the doctor, and frankly told him all his friend's fears. He reassured me, by telling me that the alum had been given him by his brother-in-law, who was also a physician like himself, and with whom he had passed the day. He also told me it was very easy to distinguish it, by certain properties, from the other corrosive substances of which we were afraid. He could not, however, easily convince his patient, in whose mind the fear of poison had become a fixed idea; nor Madame Lafarge, who habitually changed the most simple misfortunes into the darkest crimes.

Madame Penzani came to give us the benefit of her care, her receipts, her balms, and her cordials. Her love for her nephew showed itself in a multitude of words, which fatigued him fearfully; by a mania for changes and experiments against which he revolted, and which made him consign his *blue stocking* nurse to a great distance—sometimes even as far as the devil.

The day brought little amelioration to the state of the poor sufferer. Scarcely had some hours' repose brought back hope, and a smile to our lips, when a new crisis plunged us into despair. The vomiting was less frequent, the spasms more violent. One night they were so prolonged, that Mademoiselle Brun and myself, who watched

near him, could scarcely prevent him from opening his veins with a razor; and we were obliged to cover him with cold water, and expose him to the frosty air of a January night; in short, to forget the treatment of his disease, that we might soothe the horrible convulsions which tortured him.

Every morning M. Bardon gave us encouragement—that is to say, myself and my mother-in-law; for all the rest of the family united in telling us, that this state, with its complaints and agonies, were natural to M. Lafarge's temperament; and that they invariably followed his commercial occupations and fatigue.

It must be confessed, that if the patient got no better, he acted precisely contrary to all that was prescribed for him. The doctor recommended perfect silence, and the frequent use of soothing drinks. Jests and chattering resounded incessantly at M. Lafarge's bedside, and he would drink nothing but cold water; and burst into furious passions when an attempt was made to mingle a little gum or linseed with his dangerous but chosen drink.

The task of encountering the storm was generally mine. In turn with success or failure I employed the words of love, deceit, or determination, and kept for the most important prescriptions the great persuader of a brief exile into the neighbouring chamber.

I had installed my husband in my own apartment, which was warmer and larger than his own, and I took my hours of sleep in that of Mademoiselle Brun, sharing it with her. This arrangement was excessively inconvenient for me. Fatigued with watching, pains in the stomach, and a severe cold in the chest, the few hours I spent in bed, with the hope of repose, were broken in upon by a continual passing between my mother-in-law's room and that of her son. I was, so to speak, in a corridor, through which Madame Lafarge passed fifty times in a minute, sometimes with cordials she had made on her own fire, and which generally returned thither after a refusal; sometimes leaving the sick man's bed to answer the numberless messages which came from Faye, to Messieurs Denis, Buffière, and Magnaud, who had taken up their dwelling by his hearth.

These continual goings and comings were a torture to

the invalid. He endured with impatience these questions, so detestable when the answer is discouraging and invariable; these steps, so heavily light, waking him with so tender precaution as to leave him no right to complain.

Tuesday night had passed well, Wednesday much better; I was more tranquil, and listened to the equal breathing of M. Lafarge, who went to sleep with his head on my shoulder, while I murmured pleasant and affectionate words of hope and the future in his ear; when, suddenly he was roused by Madame Buffière, who rushed like a mad-woman into the chamber, kissed his hands, and sobbed, crying, "My Charles, you are about to die. Ah! unhappy being, what can become of me? what will be life without thee? Oh! my brother, thy Aména will follow thee to the tomb!"

"Aména, calm yourself; you make me ill; I am better," said M. Lafarge.

"Ah," continued Madame Buffière, "my poor Charles to die so young! I am come to render you the last cares —I am come at the risk of killing my child; you shall die in my arms."

"My God! must I then die? And you have concealed it from me—and you cared not for it?" said the poor sick man, looking at me sadly and reproachfully.

"I swear that there is no danger in your condition," I answered, being really stupified and indignant at this dangerous scene. "I do not understand your sister's conduct; with such love as this they will kill you indeed. I must beg you, Aména, to leave him."

"No, no; I will not quit him again!"

It was no longer possible for me to preserve my coolness. I turned angrily from M. Buffière, a cold spectator of all that passed, and told him I required that he should remove his wife from the chamber, and that he should prevent her re-entering it until she had become more calm and prudent.

This was a difficult measure to execute; but at last Madame Buffière was dragged out by force; crying, that I wished to engross her brother, and ravish from her his last sigh. Her rage and grief produced a frightful nervous attack.

The impression produced by this sad scene on M. La-

farge was ineffaceable. My words and oaths were powerless to reassure him.

"Poor Marie," he incessantly repeated, "must I die? I loved you so much; what will become of you?"

"Take courage, and you will still live long to be our happiness."

"Speak not to me of happiness, the very word is a pang."

"Be reasonable, then. Do you think my mouth could smile upon you if you were in danger?"

"O no; but you deceive me because they have deceived thee."

I passed the whole night in preventing Aména from approaching her brother's bed; and when M. Bardon found, on his morning visit, an increase of fever and more alarming symptoms, I indignantly told him the scene of the previous evening, with a rancour most probably not over moderate.

I asked the doctor's permission to call in a physician. I wished to have M. Ségeral, whom my uncle Pontier had particularly recommended as a man of talent and heart. This did not seem to please my mother-in-law; and on Friday morning Denis brought M. Massénat from Brives, whose reputation stood very high in the province.

M. Massénat examined the patient attentively and at several intervals; he informed himself, in a long conversation with M. Bardon, of the patient's constitution, his former illnesses, the causes to which they attributed his actual sufferings; and then declared that he was in no danger—that it was a simple nervous affection, troublesome and painful, no doubt, but certain of cure. The serious and collected manners of M. Massénat made me receive this oracle with joy and security. But to be entirely reassured, I took him aside, and asked him, with trembling earnestness, to tell me the whole truth; I also made Mademoiselle Brun ask him the same questions, and each time the answer was as positive.

The feebleness of pulse and coldness at the extremities particularly frightened me; M. Massénat assured me that they were nervous symptoms only. He ordered, to alleviate them, an opiate, soothing drinks, and a little nourishment—such as thin soups, and chicken-broths. I then

begged M. Massénat to return on the morrow—I asked it as a favour; but he told me that the presence of M. Bardon was sufficient; that he had ordered accounts of the patient's progress to be sent him; and promised to return when a change of regimen should be necessary.

I was so pleased with this satisfactory and learned visit, that I easily reconciled myself to Madame Buffière. I had sent her from the chamber on the preceding evening in wrath and impatience; so, to make my peace, I engaged her to remain with me near her brother, and counselled his mother to take a few hours of repose.

"We are now free from fear; you are fatigued," I said to her: "go and sleep; I will watch near Charles; do not disturb yourself."

"You wish to be with him alone?"

"No! you know very well that this never occurs. I have not the strength to sustain his head, and the sight of his vomiting makes me dreadfully ill."

"Go to bed, mamma," said her son.

"I see very well you both wish to drive me away; but that matters not—I shall remain."

"How unjust!" I cried.

"Yes, yes; I comprehend that you would estrange me from my son—that you look on me as nothing in the house; but I shall remain in it in spite of you, and we will see if you are to be its mistress."

"My God, Madame, remain in your ruin; when Charles is well I will remove far from your jealousies, your vile calumnies—if he loves me, he will follow me; if he prefers you, I shall have sense enough not to weep."

Not wishing to prolong these unjust recriminations, which must of necessity injure M. Lafarge, I left the chamber. I afterwards learnt that he and his mother had quarrelled violently after my departure; that he had accused her of endeavouring to separate us; and that he had even forbidden her to set foot in his chamber until she was reconciled with me. This made Madame Lafarge seek me, and beg me to excuse her vivacity, which she denominated an excess of maternal tenderness. In entreating me to forget my rancour, my mother-in-law would not forget her own; and she and her daughter imagined a thousand modes of getting rid of me.

I was very ill, very tired, and very changed in my appearance. This gave them an opportunity of inspiring M. Lafarge with serious fears for my health; and he begged me to take care of myself—not to leave my couch or my bed; and as I had no longer real fears for him, I obeyed, without being quite the dupe of the inimical diplomacy of which I was the intended victim.

CHAPTER LII.

The small quantity of arsenic requested by M. Bardon had not been sufficient to exterminate our little colony of rats; they had become still more odious to my husband, whose nerves were irritated by their racing and their continual squeakings above his head. They had also merited all my hatred by devouring my gowns, my linen, and, in short, all they found in my dressing-room. Determined to assemble formidable forces for their final extermination, I asked M. Denis to bring me a new dose of *ratsbane*, as also some rat-traps. Although I had inscribed both these exterminating means on a list of commissions, M. Denis *forgot* the rat-traps, and brought me, after one of his journeys to Brives, a dose of arsenic only, so large, that I showed it to M. Lafarge, to enable him to appreciate the steps I was about to take to revenge him on his enemies. He approved them, but forbade my assisting to make the paste, whose injurious exhalations would, he feared, injure me. Clementine was charged with this care.

The night between Friday and Saturday was a very good one. I passed great part of it with Mademoiselle Brun; and in the morning, feeling worse and more fatigued than customary, I lay down and slept until ten o'clock, when Madame Buffière came to wake me, with inquiries as to my health, and to ask if I would take a little chicken-broth. Astonished at those unaccustomed attentions, I thanked her, but declined the broth, which I told her I always found insipid and disagreeable. She

would not hear my objections, but assured me that she knew how to make chicken-broth so delicate and so nicely flavoured, that I should be sure to like it from her hand, and descended to the kitchen to set to work upon it.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, she brought me something which was nice enough. I had just swallowed it, when she returned from the chamber of M. Lafarge, and showed herself miserable because I had not left a little for her brother, who, she said, would have liked, *from sentiment*, to have partaken it with me. It was the idea of a sick man, which it was necessary to gratify: so Aména made a second cup of broth by my bedside, with the intention of passing it off as the half of that which I had myself taken. M. Lafarge being asleep, she left it on my night-table. I kept it there some time; but wishing to take a little repose, and not to be disturbed, I sent the chicken-broth to my sister-in-law, to be kept warm until her brother awoke.

On his arrival at mid-day, M. Bardon found our patient sufficiently well to be indulged with some bread soaked in Bourdeaux wine, or a little fowl and mashed potato. He also warned us, that having no fear for his recovery and a great deal of business upon his hands, he should not come on the morrow, which was Sunday; and that we had only to administer scrupulously the opiates prescribed by M. Massénat, notwithstanding M. Lafarge's repugnance to them.

M. Magnaud returned from Faye during the day, and spoke privately to my husband, who, greatly disturbed by the news, which he would not communicate to me, had a relapse, attended with increased fever; and he was much worse than on the preceding evening. I complained to Madame Buffière of these continual infractions of the physician's orders.

"We cannot always sacrifice ourselves, and pay for Charles," she said to me.

"If you do not wish me to fatigue him, Madame," added M. Magnaud, "sign me some blank acceptances, which I have in my port-folio, and I will no longer trouble him with my accounts."

I readily agreed to this, and approached my husband, to ask his authority for signing his name, when my sister-in-law and her agent prevented my doing so, by telling me that my signature was sufficient. I then signed a few slips of white paper, which they offered me, and, wishing to give a proof of order and exactness, added the date, contrary to my usual habits.

"Well, it's all to do over again," said M. Magnaud; "a woman's signature, to be available, should have no date."

Then tearing them up, he made me commence again, this time without putting any date. There were bills for six or eight thousand francs.

Emma joined us in the evening, deeply terrified. She had been told in the morning at Uzerche, that the clerks at Glandier had stated that M. Lafarge was at the point of death: and she was glad indeed to share our hopes of his recovery, when she had come to partake of our sorrow and despair. The presence of Emma was very consoling to me. I told her all my past fears, and the reassuring statements of the physicians; and she repeated to me, like all the rest of the family, that there never existed a more impatient invalid than her cousin, and that she suspected him this time of exaggerating his sufferings even more than usual, for the sake of being loved and spoilt by me.

Towards midnight, I had myself an attack of cramp in the stomach, which compelled me to lie down, while Emma replaced me at the bedside of M. Lafarge. I had told her how important it was that he should take his opiates, and how much he disliked doing so. She therefore employed my name every quarter of an hour, to induce him to swallow them.

"Take this, Charles, for the sake of Marie, who loves you so deeply," she said.

"It is very disgusting; but for her sake I obey."

"Charles, you were very glad to see her again?"

"Oh yes. You tell me that *she loves me*, then, do you?"

"Doubtless! I know well how she spoke of you to me when you were away."

On hearing this, the poor sick man took his cousin's hands, and appeared to wish to thank her.

Soon after, Madame Lafarge and Aména got rid of Emma, under pretence of sending her to take care of me. She repeated to me all she had said to my husband; and in return, I told her of all the calumnies which had been sent against me to Paris, and of the hatred which was growing more visible every day. The poor girl was indignant. The same mistrust which surrounded me surrounded her also. She had remarked that they avoided her when they wished to speak to each other; that they appeared to have some important secrets to conceal; and that Aména had sent her out of the room in a pet, that she might talk more unrestrainedly with M. Magnaud and Mademoiselle Brun.

A thousand conjectures passed through our minds. At last we concluded that these conversations related to some unfortunate speculations, which they wished to conceal, for fear of disquieting me; and the bills signed in the morning confirmed this idea, and somewhat diminished the rancour I felt at the hostile and unkindly conduct of the whole family.

At four in the morning, Emma and I resumed our places beside the patient. He appeared worse, and did not speak to me when I laid my hand upon his brow, and inquired as to its throbbing and its heat. During my absence, they had not once given him the prescribed opiate, which alone had the power to calm him. I remarked this with chagrin to Emma: he heard me, and signed to me to prepare him some of it.

As it was impossible to persuade M. Lafarge to taste a single drop of his emollient drinks, I took the opportunity, in preparing the opiates he consented to take, to add thereto a little gum; and this time, according to custom, I had made the usual addition. I had no sooner done so, than Madame Lafarge snatched the cup from me, and showed it to her son triumphantly, telling him not to take it, because I had put a white powder in it.

It was in vain that Emma remarked to her aunt, that it was only a little gum-arabic, which she had seen me put in. Madame Lafarge affected not to understand her; and when I had left the room, told her that it was so much the

worse for me to give her son the gum, when M. Massénat had expressly interdicted its use to the invalid. Emma, who positively knew the contrary, wished to excuse me, and received nothing but humiliating and harsh reproofs, accompanied by an almost formal request to return to Uzerche, and an order not to trouble herself for the future with any thing which was passing round her.

Seeing me so unhappy, *so persecuted*, Emma went home for one day only, promising to return on the morrow, and courageously bear half of my disgrace. How grateful was I to her for that touching promise! Her devotion in allowing me to exchange with her my thoughts of bitterness and discouragement, alone afforded me some little consolation in my suffering.

On Sunday morning I was very much astonished to find M. and Madame Denis installed alone at the bedside of M. Lafarge. I asked why I had not been awakened in the absence of my mother-in-law and her daughter—why he was abandoned to the care of new persons, who were ignorant of the treatment of his illness and the attentions he required. I was answered that M. Lafarge had required it, and that he did not wish his *kind M. Denis* to leave him.

I approached my husband's bed; he looked at me a long time in silence, then carried my hand to his lips, and dropped a tear upon it as he kissed it. Madame Buffière, who entered during this, wished me to go away, under pretence that I wearied her brother. This he opposed, and said, "*Look at her.*" Then taking hold of some ringlets which had escaped from my cap, he rolled them round his fingers, and appeared to forget both of us in his own reflections.

He asked for drink—I rose to satisfy him, when Aména rushed on the glass, tore it from my hands, and offered it herself to him. Deeply wounded, I was about to leave, when he called me, drew me towards him, and said, "Let them do it, but do not abandon me."

I had re-entered my chamber, to iron a gown and fasten up my hair, when Clementine came to inform me of the arrival of M. Fleyniat. I went immediately to see him; he was with my mother-in-law, and finding him with a sad and abstracted look, I became alarmed, and, drawing him aside, inquired whether there was danger, and what we

must do if he became worse. He avowed to me that he did not share M. Bardon's security; that his *nourishing regimen* appeared to him an absurdity; and, lastly, that he was frightened by the icy coldness of the extremities, the weakness of the pulse, and the unnatural and uncommon symptoms presented by this illness.

"I beg you, then," I said, "to induce my mother-in-law to call in another physician, instead of M. Bardon."

"But she tells me that it is you who oppose it."

"I! why for a week past I have in vain implored her to send for M. Ségeral."

He appeared *greatly astonished* at my answer, and advised me immediately to send to Brives for M. Ségeral, to require that he should come every day, and to have no more to do with M. Bardon, whose want of skill was very generally known, and for whom he could not explain the family partiality.

M. Fleyniat, seeing how much he had troubled me, now tried to calm me. He told me that very possibly he had exaggerated the danger; that M. Massénat had not acknowledged it; and that his decision was an oracle on which he would confidently rely. Then returning to the chamber of M. Lafarge, he again examined him attentively, permitted him to take some beer, instead of barley-water, and ordered me to give him some lukewarm water to encourage the vomiting, and cause the stomach to reject the hurtful matter which might have been introduced there.

I was obliged to encounter the ill-will and almost brutal opposition of Mesdames Lafarge and Buffière, before I could administer this last prescription. According to them I wished to stifle, wear out, and kill M. Lafarge by new vomitings. But their accusations could not shake me—I was inexorable; and in spite of them, I took several cups of water to my husband, who did not dare refuse them from my hand, and who was relieved by them, until his mother gave him a great glass of beer, when the insupportable burning in the stomach returned, with violent cramp and agony.

To finish my desolation, I learned that they had prevented the departure of the labourer whom I had sent to Brives to fetch M. Ségeral; and that, under some pretext,

Madame Lafarge had despatched her *faithful Denis* alone to Labersac, to seek another physician, M. Lespinas.

In the evening, M. Magnaud arrived. His presence seemed to dispel the uneasiness caused in my mother-in-law by M. Fleyniat. He told me he had business to speak about to M. Lafarge, and wished to be left alone with him. I objected to him the fatigue of mind it would cause, so dangerous in such a critical moment; but when he assured me that he brought good news, more fit to cure than to injure my husband, I left them alone together. I perceived, on my return, that M. Magnaud's presence had produced an effect quite opposite to the one he had appeared to expect, and that the illness and the pangs had never so violently contracted the features of the poor patient. He turned his head away on my approach, and did not appear to perceive the affectionate kiss I laid upon his hand.

I then sat myself near the fireplace, before which Mademoiselle Brun, Madame Buffière, and M. Magnaud, were talking and laughing together, and gave way to despair and frightful discouragement. The scarcely veiled hatred expressed to me by the whole family—the wall reared by their persons and their calumnies between me and my husband—that petty persecution, which wounded me continually, but did not suffice to kill me,—appeared alike odious and intolerable.

Yet I must bear it. Poor Charles's sufferings, still more than my duty, chained me to Glandier. I raised my eyes by chance to the countenances of my enemies: they were basely smiling and triumphant. The contempt this inspired took the place of my despair, and gave me strength to reason on it.

"I advise you to go to bed, Marie," said Madame Buffière, with a sneer; "you are pale; and it will please my brother, who being more habituated to my attentions, prefers them to yours."

"Do not trouble yourself about me, Madame; my place is here, and here I shall remain, as long as I think it useful and proper to do so."

Then concealing my previous grief in the depths of my soul, I took a book, and isolated myself both from their persecution and their presence.

On that evening M. Magnaud's *amiability* was insupportable. He awoke Madame Lafarge with the feathers of a pen; embraced Mademoiselle Brun by force, Madame Buffière with her own good will; and at last selected the latter for a pillow, and slept soundly on her shoulder. As I appeared to observe all this with astonishment, Madame Buffière said to me,

"What would you? He is like a brother to us."

At two in the morning, M. Lespinas entered, escorted by M. Denis. All the sleeping eyes opened to receive him with a tear. Madame Buffière would have led him into the embrasure of a window to speak to him, but he told her Denis had mentioned the state of the patient to him; and going to the bed of M. Lafarge, felt his pulse, asked him a question or two, gave him a draught which he had brought with him, and then came to warm himself, and speak to me.

I thanked M. Lespinas for braving the night and the cold to comfort illness and fear, and prayed him to tell me all he thought respecting my husband's condition. He told me he thought him affected by an obstruction of the stomach, a troublesome and tedious, but not a dangerous, disorder—at least not immediately dangerous. He then asked me if I liked my new country; if I was weary of my solitude; and if my love for horse exercise was strong enough to make me brave winter and bad roads? In answering these questions, I examined M. Lespinas, and attempted to discover what had been the motive for giving him the family confidence in preference to M. Ségeral.

He was a young man, with a brief sharp style of speech, full of ordinary and trifling expressions. Obstinacy and vanity, instead of intellect, illuminated his brow. The self-love of the physician was to be read in his eye, and the folly of the man smiled on his mouth. While he was warming himself, buried in a huge arm-chair, his feet on the hobs, rubbing his hands or passing them through his hair, Madame Buffière offered him some *eau sucrée*, called him their saviour, and sobbed while she told him how much she loved her brother. Madame Lafarge also gave vent to some exclamations of despair and mysterious sighs; while Mademoiselle Brun, Magnaud, and Denis, talked together with a sinister and affected reserve.

"My God, sir!" I cried, "conceal nothing from me," as I detected a dark glance of intelligence between my sister-in-law and the physician. "Is there any danger? I will send for M. Ségeral—I am dreadfully uneasy; no mystery, I implore you!"

"It is useless to have a second physician, since Monsieur tells us it is a long and chronic complaint," answered Aména. "But you are fatigued—go and rest yourself; we will watch to-night."

"Charles himself desires it," added my mother-in-law.

"Yes, Madame," said M. Lespinas, joining them. "It will be a long illness; reserve your strength to employ it hereafter: it is indispensable."

Exiled by these hypocritical cares for my health from my husband's bedside—seeing my rights, my duties, and my attentions usurped—I went out very indignant, very wretched, uncomforted even by a single word from my poor sick husband, who let me go in this manner, without one of those looks which protested against the bitter cup which they forced upon me.

CHAPTER LIII.

On the Monday, I was astonished at the change in M. Lafarge. His eyes were fixed, his colour livid. I saw death on his brow . . . . and, without a word, I fell on my knees to weep and pray over his already icy hand.

My husband's look was by turns fond, loving, angry, terrifying. If I left him, he called me back with one of love; if I approached, he turned away in wrath. He appeared to wish to question and reproach me,—and his mother, his sister, Denis, interrupted his words, hid from me his eyes, stole from me even the silent expression of his thoughts.

Nor was this all I had to endure; the chamber was filled with friends of the family, strangers to me—who were spies on my movements—who counted my tears and registered my griefs. I was informed that they communi-

cated their remarks to Mademoiselle Brun—to the clerks; that they whispered; that they calumniated, even in that critical hour. Unable longer to endure this torture, I shut myself in my chamber, and let the tears which stifled me run freely down my cheek.

One must lose more than oneself—one must lose a father or a mother, to feel one of those vast, infinite sorrows, which hurl their despair, their sobs, and their cries into the midst of the world's indifference; which find a desert among mankind; which have forgotten all except the tomb which is about to enclose their treasure, and heaven which is to restore it to them in eternity. Calmer and more reasonable griefs, which disturb without crushing life, are felt fully but in loneliness; they are the throbs, the regrets, of a suffering heart, rather than the death-cries of a heart in agony. They dread to appear exaggerated to some, and cold to others.

The memories of that last day have left terror and anguish in my soul, but not a positive fact in my memory. It is a fearful nightmare, from which I have awakened trembling, thrilling, with a real suffering, produced by imaginary tortures. *So near death we do not see life, we feel it.*

I only know that Emma came to me with friendship and tears; that many times, wishing to return to the bedside of the unhappy Charles, a bolt arrested my steps . . . . I know that, wishing to bring to that pillow, whence they chased me, calm and hope, I sent for a priest; that he came, and that I united my prayers to his . . . . I know that a little later the family brought me consolation, attention, tenderness, and a paper to sign . . . . that it was then permitted me to approach the bed of death, but that there was neither look nor adieu from him who had loved me . . . . I know that they tore from me the sad delight of moistening his burning lips, of raising his poor head, of chafing his icy hands . . . . I know that Emma made me leave the chamber, to spare me all these proofs of hatred—that I was very ill—that towards the morning she quitted me no more—that she wept more bitterly—that I interrogated her, and that she said to me, covering me with kisses,—

"I love you, Marie; I love you for both."

It was late on the following day when that heavy sleep of grief with which God dries tears and cheeks thought, passed from my eyelids, and restored me to life and the sorrows of reality.

My first thought was for the poor mother. I wished to mingle my regrets and tears with hers—I wished to honour the memory of him who had left us, by promising love and filial obedience to his mother; and I forgot that she did not love me, and that she had made me suffer, to remember only the cares, the love, and the respect, which were become a duty and a heritage to the widow of her poor child.

Emma kept me back; she told me that her aunt was calm, that my presence would be a new sorrow, which would too bitterly reawaken her stupified grief. She added, that her aunt had charged her to embrace and attend to me, and requested me to defer our sad meeting until the following day.

This resolution troubled me. Our hearts, until now strangers, needed union in their sorrow, to mingle in their first grief, in the sudden bursts, and in the incoherent expressions of despair. The new feelings of life often find all a past in a single tear.

My day was passed with Emma; she was full of sadness. M. Buffière alone came to cast himself into my arms, and to weep a long time with me. He told me that his wife was ill in bed; that she, like himself, loved me as a sister; he assured me afterwards that he would continue for me all he had done for his brother-in-law, and made me sign a blank power of attorney, which was to give him the means of being useful to me.

Emma, on returning to me after my cousin's departure, asked me, with a kind of uneasiness, how he had conducted himself. I recounted our conversation to her, word by word. She appeared astonished as I spoke, became abstracted, anxious; then, taking my two hands, said to me,—

"I love you much, Marie, and am about to prove it to you. I will pass nó rash judgment upon my family, but I entreat you, I beg you, as a favour, to trust your papers to no one. They talk incessantly of wills—ask me if you

have one—what you intend doing with it—and what it contains."

These words of Emma made me reflect on the will M. Lafarge had made in my favour. We were a long time finding it; a longer still, when we had found it, before deciding what we should do with it. Emma told me that there were formalities to fulfil, in order to render it available, as she had heard her aunt say; but as we neither of us knew in what they consisted, she advised me to send it to Soissons, to my lawyer.

Emma was so suspicious, that she would not let me keep it a single night in our chamber; and we had it carried to the post-office by my servant, although it was very late. I also wrote some letters to my family, in which I asked them to come to me, telling them of my grief, without mentioning my persecutions.

Early in the evening, I asked Clementine to inquire after my mother and sister-in-law. She refused to go, telling me that while I wept they robbed me; that I attended to nothing, and should become their dupe, &c. &c. Hurt at these statements, I forbade all other explanations on the part of poor Clementine, and told her rather harshly to leave my chamber. She obeyed, but returned a minute after with my cook, who assured me Clementine had told the truth, and that it was she who had warned her of it.

"They will ruin you—they will turn us all out, if Madame does not show herself mistress. Yesterday evening the plate was taken away, under pretence of securing it; and they wanted the labourer, Joseph, to take it to Faye, but he refused to wrong Madame, whom he loves as we do. Madame Lafarge, the mother, has also said to me, that if I would be in her interests she would recompense me, because she was the heir. Would you believe it? this morning, when poor master was scarcely dead, she took out all that was in his trunks near his bed, without even making the sign of a cross in behalf of his poor soul," &c. &c.

These words struck me: but, thinking them exaggerated by the devotion of Clementine, and Mion's zeal, I forbade them to repeat them to any one, promising to make myself strong enough to preserve them from every vexation; and I endeavoured to chase from my mind the

suspicion they had instilled. It seemed to me an insult to the memory of my husband, to estimate too nicely the steps his mother was taking.

On Wednesday morning Madame Lafarge entered my chamber, and embraced me, without shedding a tear. She came to tell me that Aména, too ill to leave her room, and, above all, desirous of seeing me, begged me to come and weep with her over her brother, and soften my sufferings by sharing them.

The door which communicated between my chamber and my mother-in-law's was open. I heard Madame Buffière cry out, "Marie—my sister, come, I entreat you." I leapt from my bed, and rushed into her arms, having only cast a mantilla over my shoulders.

My sister-in-law, in deep mourning, was sitting near the fire, but she did not appear to be very ill. She received me with all the appearance of despair, crying, that she felt she was dying, and that she wished to die. She then asked me for the patent, that she might cover it with kisses, and seemed not to believe me when I assured her that I had it not, and knew not where to find it, calling me cruel to refuse her so great a consolation. On a sudden, I heard steps approaching. I wished to reenter my apartment; the bolt was drawn; in vain I knocked, calling on Clementine, who came and told me that my mother-in-law had shut herself up there with a locksmith, and was forcing the secretaries.

"It cannot be—that would be too infamous!" I cried.

"My mother is mistress here, and does what she chooses," answered Aména, angrily.

"The mistress! then why steal what belongs to herself?"

At this moment, M. de Lespinas, manager of the stables of Pompadour, and M. Boucheron, the registrar, entered the chamber where I was; and on their arrival, my sister-in-law resumed her tears, her soft voice, and her demonstrations of tenderness towards me. Appalled, I remained several minutes unconscious of their visit, forgetting my strange costume, my disordered hair, the mantilla which scarcely covered me, and my naked arms and feet. I had not a tear, not a complaint, not a word —the indignation of the wife had vanquished the modesty

of the woman. A curious look from one of these gentlemen at last restored me to myself. I begged them to leave me alone; they retired, and soon after the door of my chamber was opened.

I had scarcely power to re-enter it, and shut myself up with Clementine. The poor girl was even more disgusted with these persecutions than I was. She showed me the secret drawer which they had burst to carry away the contracts, title-deeds, and important documents which it contained. She also made me observe that they had carried away all my jewels, the portrait of my mother, my father's hair, all the treasures of my souvenirs.

While I endeavoured to account to myself for this last dishonour—so cruel, if they envied me the value those objects had to my heart; so base, if they speculated on their material value,—Emma entered, and cast herself pale and trembling on my neck, speechless with grief. Believing that she suffered from the new insult which had been added to my tortures, I endeavoured to calm her, and to conceal from her what I felt, by calling her my sister, my friend, and my good angel. But she did not answer me; parting my hair from my forehead, she looked upon me wildly, and then exclaimed with sobs,—

"Marie, they say you have poisoned him; that you have killed Charles in order to wed another . . . . Marie, it is impossible! is it not?—impossible!—impossible!"

"The wretches! But no, it cannot be—you deceive yourself. Oh, in pity speak! Emma, speak—tell me all!"

"My aunt and Aména have told me so; oh, I have heard but too much—they tell it to all the world—they relate such frightful things! My God! my God! you are lost!"

"Lost!—I defy them! Calm yourself, Emma; you have shared with me all those last moments—you know whether I am innocent . . . . I will say so—we will tell them so . . . . they shall believe us. No, no, these calumnies will never harm me."

"But, Marie, you had arsenic . . . . they have found it in the chicken-broth . . . . If you were deceived!—if a fatal mistake!"—

"It is impossible!—I may have put gum in it; . . . .

but that very gum, I have eaten it before, I have eaten it since."

"Did you know what you have in the little box that I took from you yesterday?

"What I have?—gum!"

"Alas! no. I made M. Fleyniat examine it—it is arsenic!"

"Arsenic! impossible! I repeat to you, Emma, I have eaten that gum. Your uncle is deceived. Be calm, I entreat you. God! is he not in heaven to save the innocent that they accuse on earth?"

Clementine was in as great despair as my cousin. Their grief terrified me. Both spoke of justice, of the Court of Assizes, and the scaffold. I should have become mad, had I not been compelled to forget myself in order to console them.

M. Fleyniat was at Glandier; I had him summoned to have a frank and positive explanation of those abominable and foul calumnies. He came with an embarrassed air; I told him that I knew all, and breathed some slight reproaches in regard to his silence towards me. I asked him on what foundation they grounded these monstrous suspicions—formed, I wished to believe, by a mother's grief, yet whose absurdity it was necessary for me to prove, because they were accusations which it was impossible to pass over in silence."

After having assured me very wordily that he believed me innocent, M. Fleyniat told me, that I was accused of having sent poisoned cakes to Paris. That a brother of M. Buffière had warned the family of it, on learning the illness of M. Lafarge; that M. Essartier had discovered arsenic in the chicken-broth I wished the invalid to take; that Madame Lafarge had seen me, with her own eyes, put arsenic in a potion; and that, lastly, I had poisoned a piece of flannel, that I might hasten the death of my husband by friction.

I felt reassured, on listening to these accusations,—they appeared to me so easy of refutation. The cakes had been made by my mother-in-law herself; the chicken-broth had been prepared by the desire, and under the superintendence, of Madame Buffière; and all the frictions

had been made by Messieurs Buffière and Denis. I could not therefore have put poison in the flannel.

In explaining these circumstances to M. Fleyniat, I gave him to understand that I did not intend them as a defence; that far from accepting the position of one accused, I claimed by too good right the position of a victim. It was impossible not to believe my mother-in-law to be absolutely mad; and, to terminate all these calumnious and infamous lies, I resolved to strengthen myself with the testimony of the physicians who had attended the sick man,—Messieurs Bardon, Massénat, and Lespinas, who had given me hope in the last moments, and had always combatted my fears. M. Fleyniat told me I should address myself to M. Lespinas in vain—that he believed me guilty, *boasted* of having discovered *the crime*, and had demanded an examination of the corpse. I also learned that Madame Lafarge had opposed this measure, saying to M. Lespinas and to several persons, that I had formally refused the examination, and had hastened all the last ceremonies in order to avoid it.

I begged M. Fleyniat to deny this last assertion, and in my name to require the examination. I begged him to be present at that mournful operation. I also again demanded the presence of the often-refused M. Ségeral; and the hope of speedily eliciting the truth, clear, evident, and palpable to all, gave me strength to support the existing suspicions, and to walk without sinking in that path of sorrow, persecution, and anguish.

CHAPTER LIV.

The justice of peace of Lubersac came to place the seals on my effects. Emma, in telling me of his arrival, begged me, in the name of M. Fleyniat, to burn all the papers and letters which could compromise me, and to profit by the few minutes yet left me, in putting them beyond the reach of the scrutinizing and rigid inquisitions of the law.

I made my kind little cousin understand, that such coun-

sel as she gave me in the name of her uncle was unworthy of my innocence; that being free from remorse, I was also free from fear, and only wished to preserve a packet of letters written by me to M. Lafarge, which had been returned to me in the morning, and in which I hoped to discover facts which might justify me.

Prejudiced by the calumnies of the Lafarge family, the men of law, as they entered my chamber, cast around them curious and condemnatory looks, which fell like lead upon me. This first unmerited humiliation was a horrible anguish. My brow reddened; tears gushed from my eyes; and I was about to sink under my misfortune, when a look of Emma's, full of hope and love, roused an unknown courage in me, and made me feel that, supported by noble and kindly affections, I could encounter destiny bravely.

All my papers were read and commented on; my open albums, my gum, my almond-paste, were gathered together with exaggerated precautions, and a strange excess of threatening significance and cruelty.

The father of M. Buffière, leaning against the chimney, appeared to direct their researches, to elicit hatred, and to keep it alive by perfidious and accusing allusions; and I could scarcely restrain the indignation of Emma—the anger of Clementine—and teach them contempt, which preserves us from these two sentiments.

All these men had barely left my room, when my servant rushed into it in despair, crying out,

"My poor mistress, they say that I shall cause you to mount the scaffold, and that I shall mount it too."

Terror-stricken at this new incident, we had scarcely the power to calm him—to calm ourselves—sufficiently to understand the recital of his terribly foolish and imprudent conduct; and which, indeed, compromised me effectually.

Clementine had charged him to kill the rats, and had given him the arsenic fetched by Denis. Occupied at the moment, my servant had placed it in an old hat, and had forgotten it for two days; then, having been warned of the suspicion which had been secretly raised against me, and being fearful that he should be included in the accusation, if the poison were found in his possession, he had confided his fears to the groom; and both had thought it prudent to bury the packet of arsenic in the garden. That pru-

dence, however, did not prevent their babbling. Their secret, confided to three or four persons, had been denounced to Madame Buffière; who, in her turn, had denounced it to the justice of peace, who had the packet dug up from the garden.

Alfred was severely examined as to his recital, and the apparent culpability of his conduct; they threatened him with the *scaffold*, if he did not avow that he had acted by my orders. They told him that his silence would destroy himself without saving me; that he had opened to them the traces of the crime. And the unhappy youth, who knew me to be innocent, who was devoted to me, and who was above all things a coward, tore his hair, and would have killed himself, that he might not be condemned to die.

I was crushed by this concourse of accusing appearances, and for some time was incapable of consoling the very stupid, but very innocent *cause* of this new charge. At last I reasoned with the poor despairing fellow; told him that he had nothing personally to fear, and enjoined him to be calm, exact, and precise in his words; then I pardoned him all the involuntary injury he might have done me, and assured him that, as justice was superior to all appearances, innocence should be above all fear.

The cook succeeded to Alfred, and came to me as exasperated as he was, but without fear. She came to tell me that Madame Lafarge accused her of having poisoned the cakes sent to Paris; that they affected to mistrust her, and would take no nourishment prepared by her hands.

"It is atrocious," she added; "it will cause the good God and his saints to blush! Denis and Buffière plunder the forge. The mother and daughter are mowing the house like a meadow. There are a parcel of clowns who set out every night to Faye, under the escort of the old Buffière, and come back in the morning to eat and drink all the provisions which remain in the house. It is very painful to see Madame weep and take on so, while we take her interests to heart."

I was obliged still to preach patience and silence; and Mion went away weeping, and repeating that I was as

good as good bread, but that I trusted so much to my honesty of purpose, that they would manage to ruin me.

I learnt from Mion that the accusations against me had been received with a great deal of indignation by the servants and workmen; that no one dared to mention them openly in the kitchen. This was a great pleasure to me, for I felt less deserted.

Towards evening M. Buffière wished to see me. In spite of all my repugnance, I yielded to his wish, and to the counsel of Emma. He came hypocritically to ask after my health, to tell me that he had been obliged to absent himself on business, and was quite ignorant why they had decided that there should be an examination of the body. I asked him if he was also ignorant of the accusations of his wife and mother-in-law. He formally denied at first that they were guilty of *the calumny* I imputed to them. But when I cited M. Fleyniat as the person who had informed me, he contented himself with saying that they were *mad*, and that sorrow had bewildered them; then, assuring me of his tenderness with tears, he called himself my very tender and devoted brother.

I soon learnt the motive of this visit and this farce. The paper they had induced me to sign for M. Roque, on the day of M. Lafarge's death, was not available. M. Buffière wished to make me sign a second, and, in a circuitous way, made me comprehend that such generosity would soften the denunciations of the family by proving my disinterestedness. At this perfidious and odious insinuation, I looked fixedly on him; and I caused his eyes to fall, and made his brow grow pale beneath my glance.

"I understand you," I said to him; "and I swear to you that I will sign no paper until truth shall have confounded both the calumny and those who framed it."

"But you deceive yourself with respect to my intentions. If you refuse to sign, M. Roque will declare M. Lafarge a bankrupt—you will ruin yourself—you will disgrace us" . . .

"My part is taken—it is irrevocable; M. Roque shall wait the attestation of the surgeons. I will say nothing before—you have my last word."

On the next day all the members of the family arrived. Some few only asked to see me. Messieurs Joseph Ma-

tere and H. Brugère would not leave me during the sinister proceedings which were to decide between me and my enemies. There was heart in their words and in their looks. I should have preferred being alone in this hour of anguish—still, their presence was not painful to me.

That day, an age of anxiety and suffering, was my initiation to the bitternesses of my future.

The fatality which attended me having been manifested by the concourse of accusing circumstances which had arisen to crush me during the last ten days, my conscience was sometimes powerless to preserve me from those fearful thoughts that passed through my brain during the trial which was to decide both my life and my honour. My chamber was isolated—no news came there. Clementine, Emma, and my two cousins, went in turns to ascertain what was going forward. No longer able to conquer my restlessness, I profited by a moment, when I was left alone, to ask of M. Rivet, *procureur du roi* at Brives, a short interview. He came, moved and compassionate. He was an aged man, gentle and venerable in appearance; he gave me hope of a happy result, and told me that the operation, already somewhat advanced, had not caused the discovery of the least indication of poison.

An hour, two hours more, rolled on—every messenger returned with increased hope in his eyes; at last M. Fleyniat rushed into my chamber—no arsenic had been found! I cast myself weeping into the arms of Emma, and offered my acknowledged innocence to that sweet girl as the only return worthy of her beautiful devotion.

M. Bardon himself came to confirm the good tidings. He told me, that not for one instant had he shared the suspicions; that the malady had been natural; that he had always been convinced of it; and that the presumptuous confidence of M. Lespinas had alone caused so much trouble. He told me, also, that M. Lespinas had appeared to remark, during the examination, corrosions and traces of poison, invisible to all his companions. But his opinion had been forced to bend to theirs, and he was infuriated at not having been infallible. I asked if all was ended. He told me that there remained some chemical experiments to make upon the drinks which had been preserved.

I was surrounded by friends and congratulations, when the men of justice, the gendarmes, Madame Lafarge, and Madame Buffière entered, to make me sign the bottles containing the liquids destined for analysis. The first wore a look of compassion; they reassured me by their words and looks; the ladies, on the contrary, appeared humiliated and affrighted. In marking some of the bottles, I showed an emotion which made my hand tremble, and the registrar said to me—

"Reassure yourself, Madame, the opinion of these gentlemen is, that arsenic given in such strong and frequent doses would have caused ravages visible to the eyes. Reassure yourself, then, there is nothing more to fear."

"That is not sure yet," said Madame Buffière, with a voice intended for a sobbing one; "there are some white things in these liquids which are not natural."

Madame Lafarge went out, and returned with a bit of flannel. "They have rubbed my son with this flannel, I desire it may be analyzed." "I beg you, Messieurs," added she, "to envelope it entirely in paper. The white powder I remarked must not be allowed to evaporate."

There was a general movement of surprise. The registrar obeyed in silence. M. Roque, who since the morning had called on me frequently, again requested to speak with me.

I begged all the family to retire, and was left alone with him. He expressed to me, first, the share he had taken in my troubles, and how pleased he was at the happy result of the measures which had justified me. Then he said to me—

"My good lady, I have come myself. You are young, separated from your family, very ignorant of business; I would warn you of the dangers which surround you. Madame Buffière has made you sign a blank power of attorney, by which we might seize your whole fortune. It is here; tear it, and sign instead the little paper I offer you, and which cannot compromise you."

I was touched by this good faith, which protected my ignorance.

I expressed my feelings to him. He asked if I had a solicitor. On learning that I knew no one in the province,

and that I had not thought about it, he promised to choose one, and send him to me.

I wished to inform my sister and my aunts of the calumnies and persecutions that I had suffered, as well as to inform them of the positive lie given to my accusers by the examination of the body. I seized the first moment of repose to write to them. Madame Lafarge, who was in the kitchen when the labourer Joseph received the order to go to Uzerche to post the letters, immediately ascended to my room, and entered it without being announced.

"Come, my daughter," she said, embracing me. "Grief had affected my mind. I have accused you unjustly. I beg your pardon, before Emma, before Clementine, in the name of our poor deceased; do not bear malice."

I could make no answer.

"I am sure that you are about to annoy and afflict your family, by telling them of your distress and our suspicions. Be reasonable. I promise you we will love you well; we will care for your interests as if they were our own. I beg of you, do not disquiet your friends too much."

"Oh, Madame, I have suffered so much, that I have need to open my heart to those I love."

"How malicious and susceptible you are!"

"*Susceptible*, Madame! You forget what you have said, while pointing me out to justice and the world: 'Behold the wretch! behold the poisoner!'"

Madame Lafarge began to weep, to pray me to be reconciled with her, and to forget my suspicions. She was the mother of my husband,—an old, unhappy, widowed woman, in mourning for her son: I made an effort therefore to conquer my sorrowful resentment.

"A single question yet. Have you told your suspicions to poor Charles? Have you added the agony of the heart to the agony of the body? Have you called the curse of a dying man upon my head? If you can tear from my soul so torturing a thought, I will then endeavour to forget, and to commence the duty I owe you."

My mother-in-law embraced me, and swore she had said nothing to her son. She persuaded me not to send my letters the same evening, and even to write others, which should partially conceal my indignation and my woes.

Madame Buffière being recalled to Faye by her business and her children, came to excuse herself and bid me adieu. She also begged me not to be annoyed at her taking her mother with her, and keeping her for some time at her house.

I was comforted by this temporary absence. I needed solitude and time to forget the past, and to undertake, not an affection henceforth impossible, but the strict observance of my duties. The news of the departure of Madame Lafarge being spread in the neighbourhood, the labourers and the peasants were indignant at her desertion of me. The *adjoint* and a good old peasant of Blyssac came to reproach her and oppose her project.

"God will not bless you," they said, "for thus abandoning your son's widow. Your daughter has her husband; your daughter-in-law is without family, hope, or children. You must console her, and she must console you. Every one will say that it is infamous of you. The poor dear widow is neither proud nor haughty—she has always a good word for the poor. You must not leave her to go into the country."

Madame Lafarge appeared moved by these frank and touching exhortations: she promised to return. As for me, I seized the rough hands of these two men, and I pressed them with all my heart, praying them to come again to see me, and to aid me with their counsels and their kindness. If I have never since seen those honest peasants, I preserve their memory amongst those which have fortified me against sorrow and trial by softening them.

CHAPTER LV.

Emma had been compelled to return to Uzerche for two days. I remained therefore alone in these ruins, shattered by time, and now iced by death,—alone, without relations, without friends, with a few devoted servants; with M. Denis instituted guardian of the seals, and who had declared himself my superintendant and my master.

Free then, and believing myself above suspicion, my first thought had been to return to the bosom of my family, if I had not hoped the blessing of becoming a mother—if I had not felt that I should preserve, for my dear little child, the fortune, the family, the friends, of his father. I suffered much; but the life of my little *Jacqueline* appeared revealed to me by that very suffering; and I blessed it, and derived from it even strength and courage.

This hope was also the hope of the brave workmen who had attached themselves to me. They made themselves acquainted, by means of Clementine, with the condition of their future mistress; and when they heard of my sickness and of my widened dresses, they were happy, and thought as I did. I was obliged to separate myself from my good founders: I had no work to give them. M. Denis made them endure a martyrdom. I was too weak, too abandoned, to protect them; so I advised them to take work in a neighbouring forge. They departed weeping, promising me to return at the first word on my part. They all told me the forge was in a deplorable state; that during the last few days every thing portable had been borne to Faye; and that there were many reports concerning the enormous debts M. Lafarge had left.

In writing to my aunt Garat, I begged her, in case none of my family could come to Glandier, to send me a solicitor, who might set things in order around me, and give me a little resignation. I shrank appalled from my life and my future duties; I knew not how I could live alone, far from my friends—how I could stifle my imagination under figures—how I could make my thoughts *industrious;*—I only knew that if I had a child, I should love it so much that all things would become possible for it. M. Roque came, as he had promised me, with his advocate. He had struck a balance in his books, after a scrupulous examination, by which it appeared he was a creditor to the amount of 28,000 francs, which he begged me to secure to him upon my settlement. This sum appeared very large to me; knowing that there were very many other creditors, and not wishing to be unjust and give all to one, I asked M. Roque to wait the arrival of a member of my family, before entering on this new

engagement. M. Roque told me that this delay would force him to take legal proceedings, and that M. de Violaine, my brother-in-law, would find himself mixed up in the matter most disagreeably. As I did not comprehend how my brother-in-law could have been compromised in these money-matters, he showed me a letter. He appeared stupified when I assured him that the style, writing, and signature were not those of M. de Violaine.

After a moment's silence, M. Roque drew from his pocket a bundle of bills, and asked me if I knew the names which were written on them; and as I answered him in the negative, he said that it was horrible—that all these bills were forged; that M. Lafarge had unworthily swindled him; and if he were not dead, he would have sent him to the galleys.

I was thunderstruck at these words; but soon learnt the value of money, by repurchasing, for 28,000 francs, the honour of the name I bore. I signed, exacting only of M. Roque absolute silence.

M. Lalande, M. Roque's lawyer, then entered upon my business. He asked me if I had a will? I told him that I had placed it in my solicitor's hands at Soissons; but that it was useless, since I believed myself with child.

"You deceive yourself," he answered; "the family say your pregnancy only exists in *your imagination*."

"But, sir, it is my mother-in-law herself who has employed all her cares, and very many words, to convince me of that which you now deny."

"Perhaps it was a good way to prevent M. Lafarge from providing for your future, and of preventing a will in your favour."

M. Lalande then spoke to me of the calumnies which had pursued me. He informed me that Madame Lafarge was stopping at Pompadour, and had not renounced her odious accusations. I did not disturb myself at this uncharitable conduct of my mother-in-law, nor did it astonish me.

I had learnt from a little god-daughter of Madame Buffière, before whom they spoke openly enough, that these ladies had been annoyed that no arsenic was found in the body, and that during the whole evening following the examination they would repeat, "How inconceivably un-

fortunate it was to find no poison!" I also learnt that these ladies spoke of me in terms most outrageous and most hateful. This young girl, whom I scarcely knew until M. Lafarge's return, had shared my watching and care near the invalid. Good and compassionate, she felt assured that I was not guilty, that I might become a victim; and she had loved me, and had thought it her duty to inform me of the hatred secretly indulged towards me. The mother of Charlotte, M. Lafarge's nurse, shared the sympathy and generous devotion of her daughter. They have preserved the one and proved the other to the last. Ancient affections, prayers, and threats have shaken neither. May they be honoured in their constancy!

I asked M. Lalande what was the opinion at Brives on the subject of the accusation made against me. He told me that they awaited the result of the experimental researches before pronouncing on it; but he could not conceal from me that the frequent journeys of Messieurs Magnaud, Buffière, and Denis, had been hurtful to me, and that if these suspicions strengthened, and I should be placed at a criminal bar, evidence would not suffice to exculpate me with the inhabitants of Limousin, always malevolent, envious, and slanderous of strangers.

"In that case, Madame," added M. Lalande, "you must fly; and I will assist your flight before they have taken measures to arrest you—I will be near you. I have a cabriolet, a good horse, and a passport given to my wife, which will suit you to a marvel. I beg you not to refuse my offer. Deign to listen to my voice, which is that of prudence and reason."

I thanked M. Lalande with emotion, but refused his offers.

"You are wrong," he said to me again; "a great magistrate has declared, 'If they accused me of having stolen the towers of Notre Dame, I would fly, rather than await a trial.'"

I begged M. Lalande not to weaken my resolution, which I believed to be both honourable and bold, and to allow me to believe in justice as I believed in my innocence. In the end, I accepted with gratitude advice which he gave me, not for flying from, but for resisting danger.

M. Roque, who continued to display his interest in me, asked me if I had no need of money. I told him, with sufficient embarrassment, that I did not possess a sous. He offered me, with great kindness, a cheque on his bankers: I accepted it; and he had the kindness to send me, on the next day, one for some hundred francs.

Emma returned from Uzerche quite as devoted as she went; not having allowed her friendship to wither or to bend before the foul breath of the wicked, who had endeavoured to shake it. The dull, heavy silence which oppressed me, made me fear the storm: my conscience could scarcely reassure me. I felt that, from the concussion of so many calumnies, the lightning might evolve to destroy me. Every day, every hour, brought us new apprehensions. The letter of the fifteenth of August had been placed in the hands of justice on the day following M. Lafarge's death, as the foundation of the accusations, by M. Buffière, who, after having offered my head to the axe of the executioner, had returned to Glandier that he might lay upon my lips the kiss of peace, and declare himself a stranger to the blamable suspicions of his wife. The powder found in the chicken-broth was recognised as arsenic—the quantity was immense; and they said that it was I who had directed that drink to be given him. Mademoiselle Brun, who had left on the night of the death, with M. Fleyniat, preserved a mysterious silence on all that had passed, but suffered from accusatory nervous attacks, during which, thinking she saw me putting arsenic in the chicken-broth, she turned her finger with frightful and persevering rapidity. She could not sleep alone, and needed a person to reassure her, and listen to her dreams. To sum up all, Denis went through all the towns and villages, relating that during a fortnight I had fed M. Lafarge with arsenic—that he should like to see me cut into pieces; while Magnaud assured M. Lafarge's numerous creditors, that, before poisoning him, I had entirely ruined him by my mad extravagance.

My letters were intercepted; I wished to send my faithful Clementine to Paris to tell my family of all my agonies. Her departure was denounced—the good creature was about to be arrested and imprisoned, as my accomplice, if,

having been informed of it, I had not again summoned her to my side.

Having been told, a day before their arrival, of the coming of the *procureur du roi* and the *juge d'instruction*, I again refused to fly. I remained strong in my will and in my conscience, and prepared myself to undergo an examination with as little fear as possible. I descended deep into my memory; I sought to recall insignificant circumstances, unperceived in their commencement, which were tortured by calumny into grave and terrible accusations. I also recommended my servants to seek for the truth, and tell it with exactness.

M. Brugère, remaining near me, could not, from his family position, direct my defence. He called to my assistance M. Saint Avit, his father-in-law, whose reputation as an advocate extended far beyond Corrèze and Limousin. The health of M. Saint-Avit did not permit him to come to Glandier, but he sent me his son, who brought me, with the advice dictated by the experience of his father, the generous and frank sympathies of a young and noble heart. I entrusted him with the letters and papers belonging to M. Lafarge which remained in my possession.

The *procureur du roi* and the judge arrived in the morning. The day passed in the interrogation of Mademoiselle Brun, Denis, and my servants. I was astonished to find that the witnesses communicated freely together, and that they were not allowed to approach me; and that I was, as it were, confined in my own chamber. I only saw Emma and Clementine, and them not until after they had made their depositions.

My poor Emma was troubled and in despair; she knew not what to make of the box of gum which she had taken from the pocket of my apron, and in which M. Fleyniat had discovered arsenic.

Emma could not determine to place it in the hands of the *procureur du roi*—she believed me lost by her fault, and wept: full of fears, regrets, and dark apprehensions, I comforted her, by telling her the poison was far more likely to exist in her uncle's imagination than in the unfortunate box; but not daring to take upon myself to give her advice, I pressed her to trust her secret to M. Brugère.

The determination of our three united consciences was, that the box should be placed in the hands of justice, to shelter ourselves from remorse and suspicion, by acting without deceit, by telling the whole truth, as well that which could injure me as that which might save me. My examination commenced at eight in the evening, and lasted three hours.

I had previously thought that I should only have to answer questions connected with the poison, and felt myself firm and bold; but when I saw all my past life unveiled by the cold inquiries which sought to bare my very soul, I could scarcely contain my indignation, or conquer my despair. I felt the tears roll from my eyes—I felt an icy hand weighing on my thoughts—I could scarcely stammer out a few words, and only regained my self-possession when I had to answer accusations as to the odious and material facts of the poisoning alone.

Our actions belong to men, but our thoughts to God alone! So long as those thoughts have not wandered to the lip, been written on parchment, or translated into actions—so long as they have not embodied their joy, their grief, their souvenirs, or their regrets but in the abyss of our soul, they should be tameless, free as the stars of heaven, and far above the despotic inquisitions of the law.

The words of the *juge d'instruction* did not allow me long to doubt his prejudices. I saw that the examination of the witnesses had been less directed to discover the guilty one than to convict and crush the one they had prejudged already. I do not think that there was a feeling of hatred actuating M. la Ch.; but there are some understandings too confined to lodge two conflicting ideas at one time. The Lafarge family had first occupied his head, and I now rapped in vain at the gate of the magisterial brain.

The *procureur du roi* fulfilled his painful duty towards me with a gentle and sad compassion; he had consideration as great as my misfortune. I was alone with him when he announced to me that I was to be transferred by the police to the prison at Brives. Indignant, I immediately rose from my chair, as if to protest my innocence. I fell back mute, chilled, stifled by the fatality of my destiny. I believe I should not have lived ten minutes in this

state, if a tear, which fell upon the cheek of my good and loyal prosecutor, had not restored me the faculty of weeping. M. Rivet took advantage of that moment to promise me all the kindness in his power. He gave me three days to endeavour to obtain the favourable interference of the *procureur général*. He told me how cruelly he felt his duty at that moment; and I found some words to thank him for having so generously softened his mournful mission—for having fulfilled the severe duty of the magistrate with so much humanity.

This news fell like a thunderbolt among my domestics. Clementine especially was mad with despair; she ran sobbing into my chamber, looked at me, then hid her face that she might see me no more, and shrieked with indignation and grief. Emma, who had left me in despair, came back to me. I was astonished at her calmness.

"Clementine," she said, "they have permitted you to go to prison with her. I also shall accompany her for some days."

"Oh, God be praised! I feel that I may live," I cried, pressing in my arms these two noble creatures. "So long as I am loved, I can suffer without despair, and without weakness. But dear Emma, my good guardian-angel, can I allow you to undergo the fatigues, the humiliation, of the journey? and you my kind Clé, know you what a prison is, far from your family, from your country!"

Neither of them permitted me to go on. Clementine wept no more; she spoke of our departure with an air almost joyous. She seemed to forget the misfortune, when they allowed her to share it with me; and the generous girl thanked me for taking her to prison, not willing to hear her devotions spoken of as any thing but very common; and she was almost affronted by my gratitude.

That same day the gendarmes arrived and installed themselves at Glandier. That same day also, M. Brugère, ending his generous and protecting mission, set out for Limoges, in order to procure from the *procureur général* permission for me to remain in my own house, under the guard of a file of gendarmerie. This journey had no

result. He found M. Dumont-Saint-Priest, already greatly prejudiced against me. Magnaud, Buffière, and Denis had instilled their calumnies into his mind.

Several members of his family, friends of Mesdames Buffière and Lafarge, had described to him their touching despair, my cruel and odious conduct. He had no pity for a *monster*.

I expected a refusal, and was not made too unhappy by it. The sad mansion of Glandier appeared every day more deserted and more dreary—I was afraid.... There had been a crime; there was an assassin! Who was he? I made Alfred and the labourer Joseph sleep across my door, and yet in the night I started at the least noise. The wind howling through the corridors frightened me. Sometimes even I turned my lips, with trembling, from the drinks which were about to slake my thirst. Oh yes! I was afraid, dreadfully afraid; for if the author of the crime had not recoiled from substituting my head for his own on the scaffold, might not events create an interest and an impression which would oblige him to sacrifice himself the victim he had wished to destroy in the name of the law?

The insolence of Denis was no longer bounded. One evening he entered my chamber in a state of complete drunkenness; and placing himself opposite my bed, he leant on it, and drew me a disgusting picture of my prison, the brutality of the jailors, the degradation of the women, whose labours, bed, and repast, I should share. Then changing the subject, he advised me to *decamp;* to procure money, and trust in him; that he could easily get me beyond the frontier. Lastly, as I raised my head with scorn, and ordered him to leave the room, he went away, murmuring—

"Yes, *raise it; raise your princely head.* The executioner will *lower* it for you famously."

I was so terrified by this scene, that I addressed myself to the gendarmes who guarded me, to pray them to interdict the door of my apartment to that wretched man, who might become dangerous in the brutality of drunkenness. M. de Tourdonnet was in Berry: every one whom I had seen abandoned me in the hour of danger,—all, except Emma, who had become my guardian-angel, and

the young advocate with whom I had passed two hours at Tulle. Oh, how I thanked him for having believed in my innocence! M. Lachaud sent me no common consolations; but he granted to the poor, humiliated, disgraced woman his devotion and his respect—may Heaven bless him for it!

It was one in the morning when the brigadier of the gendarmerie came to tell me the hour of departure had arrived, and that horses waited us. I had selected and obtained the advanced hour of the night to ride on horseback to Vigeois, where my carriage awaited me.

To leave my chamber I was obliged to cross that of M. Lafarge. There reigned not there that calm of death which breathes into the heart a consolation and a prayer, but a sad and ominous disorder. I went to kneel beside that bed of grief.

"Charles!" I mentally exclaimed, "Charles! you see what I suffer—you know my innocence,—from the height of heaven watch over me, enlighten my judges, be the providence of her whom you have loved."

I rose strengthened, and descended into the corridor, whose sombre vaults, lighted by torches, resounded with the neighing of horses, with their impatient pawings, and with the ring of metal caused by the long sabres of the gendarmes trailing on the ground.

The domestics of the house, my own labourers, the poor inhabitants of our domains, waited for me at the foot of the staircase with sobs and tears. Some seized my hands, others kissed the hem of my gown, while they would exclaim, "Poor lady, may God accompany you and bring you back! Go; we well know that it is not you who have caused him to die. We will offer to God *des neuvaines* [nine days' devotion] for you. Poor woman! Poor, poor woman! Must we thus look on your destruction."

These touching testimonies of regret and affection did me much good, but made me much worse at the same time. I abandoned my hands to those of these honest men in tears. I embraced these good women, who vowed tapers to the Virgin to obtain my return among them, and who made upon me the sign of the cross.

This scene exhausted me. The brigadier carried, rather than led me, to my horse.

"Adieu! adieu! poor lady; may God preserve you!" again cried all the good souls who surrounded me.

"Adieu! I am innocent. Adieu! pray for me."

The rain fell frozen from a starless heaven; the moon continued veiled in the gray and troubled vapour of the clouds; and the groaning wind whirled the dead leaves of the chestnut-trees around us. I had let the reins fall upon the neck of Arabska, who paced slowly on, with lowered head. I had one of my hands in that of Emma, and wept bitterly.

After two hours, the peasant who acted as our guide lost his way; the gendarmes did not know the road, which, always very bad, was now a bog or a torrent; and I was compelled myself to serve as a guide along the road which perhaps conducted me to death.

This necessity of watching over the safety of others; the thoughts of danger, always alluring and sweet when life weighs heavy on the heart; the motion; the excitement,—calmed the agony of the departure. The rain had soaked through my dress. An honest gendarme covered me with his cloak, and deprived himself of his large gloves to warm my chilled hands; and after five hours' journey we arrived at Vigeois. The excellent man reminded me that Clementine had recommended me to his care, and he would himself dry and chafe my feet, numbed by the cold

M. Fleyniat offered to accompany me as far as Brives; I accepted his offer gratefully. The emotions and fatigues of the night had overcome me; it became necessary therefore for us to stop half-way, that I might obtain a few hours' repose; it was consequently already very late when we arrived at Brives.

My arrival was expected. The populace crowded round my carriage; shouts, laughter, gross and insulting words fell on my ears. The prison-door opened; at the sound of the bolts I involuntary recoiled; I made two steps backwards, then, collecting all my strength, with desperate courage I crossed the threshold of my tomb!

THE END.